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*Great Detective Stories*

FROM DICKENS TO GABORIAU

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THE CUPID AND LION

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1924

# *Great Detective Stories*

FROM DICKENS TO GABORIAU

EDITED BY  
JOSEPH LEWIS FRENCH  
*Editor, Masterpieces of Mystery, etc., etc.*



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## FOREWORD

**I**N pursuance of our original plan to present the detective-story, either as fact or fiction, in due chronological sequence, we offer in our second volume a condensed version of three great masterpieces: "Bleak House" by Charles Dickens, "The Moonstone" by Wilkie Collins, and "File No. 113" by Gaboriau.

Even the reader who is more or less familiar with Dickens' perhaps greatest work, will find the sheer detective motive which is the plot — stripped of all extraneous details — absorbing reading. The same holds equally true regarding Wilkie Collins' long novel "The Moonstone." "File No. 113," a masterpiece of sheer detective story-telling, is not necessarily so highly condensed in the present version. Gaboriau devoted a short but very laborious life to the long detective-story and has been called in consequence "the father of the detective-novel." Certainly in the present instance he divides his honors with two of the greatest masters of English fiction.

JOSEPH LEWIS FRENCH





*Inspector Bucket*

CHARLES DICKENS

*B*LEAK House which according to some authorities shares with *David Copperfield* the honor of being *Dickens'* masterpiece is, so far as the plot is concerned, purely a detective-story. An atmosphere which enshrouds some great mystery haunts the reader from the moment *Lady Dedlock*, one of the three principal characters, appears on the scene. The shadow grows and deepens as the narrative unfolds with all the art of which *Dickens* was so supreme a master. Finally at just the proper moment of suspense *Inspector Bucket* is introduced — and the thrilling dénouement — one of the most remarkable in all literature, — begins. The creation of *Inspector Bucket* was a labor of love in the hands of *Dickens*, who drew the portrait from a very intimate friend with whom he often explored Darkest London — *Inspector Field* of the Metropolitan Police Force. What an admirable union of qualities meets in *Inspector Bucket*! Coolness, sagacity, shrewd reasoning powers, unique deductive genius, combined with a courtesy that could captivate a lord, and the courage of a whole squadron of tried veterans. It is entirely conceivable that these were the personal traits of the original. We have as a result on the whole a living picture of a very human and likable person, — perhaps the most so in all detective literature. — EDITOR.

# *Inspector Bucket*

FROM "BLEAK HOUSE."

CHARLES DICKENS

VOLUMNIA, LADY DEDLOCK, has returned to her house in town for a few days previous to her departure for Paris, where her ladyship intends to stay some weeks; after which her movements are uncertain. The fashionable intelligence says so, for the comfort of the Parisians, and it knows all fashionable things. To know things otherwise, were to be unfashionable. My Lady Dedlock has been down at what she calls, in familiar conversation, her "place" in Lincolnshire.

Sir Leicester Dedlock is only a baronet, but there is no mightier baronet than he. His family is as old as the hills, and infinitely more respectable. He has a general opinion that the world might get on without hills, but would be done up without Dedlocks. He would on the whole admit Nature to be a good idea (a little low, perhaps, when not inclosed with a park-fence), but an idea dependent for its execution on your great county

families. He is a gentleman of strict conscience, disdainful of all littleness and meanness, and ready, on the shortest notice, to die any death you may please to mention rather than give occasion for the least impeachment of his integrity. He is an honorable, obstinate, truthful, high-spirited, intensely prejudiced, perfectly unreasonable man.

Sir Leicester is twenty years, full measure, older than my lady. He will never see sixty-five again, nor perhaps sixty-six, nor yet sixty-seven. He has a twist of the gout now and then, and walks a little stiffly. He is of worthy presence, with his light gray hair and whiskers, his fine shirt-frill, his pure white waistcoat, and his blue coat with bright buttons always buttoned. He is ceremonious, stately, most polite on every occasion to my Lady, and holds her personal attractions in the highest estimation. His gallantry to my Lady, which has never changed since he courted her, is the one little touch of romantic fancy in him.

Indeed, he married her for love. A whisper still goes about, that she had not even family; howbeit, Sir Leicester had so much family that perhaps he had enough, and could dispense with any more. But she had beauty, pride, ambition, insolent resolve, and sense enough to portion out a legion of fine ladies. Wealth and station, added to these, soon floated her upward; and for years, now, my

Lady Dedlock has been at the center of the fashionable intelligence, and at the top of the fashionable tree.

How Alexander wept when he had no more worlds to conquer, everybody knows — or has some reason to know by this time, the matter having been rather frequently mentioned. My Lady Dedlock, having conquered *her* world, fell, not into the melting, but rather into the freezing mood. An exhausted composure, a worn-out placidity, an equanimity of fatigue not to be ruffled by interest or satisfaction, are the trophies of her victory. She is perfectly well-bred. If she could be translated to Heaven to-morrow, she might be expected to ascend without any rapture.

She has beauty still, and if it be not in its hey-day, it is not yet in its autumn. She has a fine face — originally of a character that would be rather called very pretty than handsome, but improved into classicality by the acquired expression of her fashionable state. Her figure is elegant, and has the effect of being tall. Not that she is so, but that “the most is made,” as the Honorable Bob Stables has frequently asserted upon oath, “of all her points.” The same authority observes, that she is perfectly got up; and remarks, in commendation of her hair especially, that she is the best-groomed woman in the whole stud.



With all her perfections on her head, my Lady Dedlock has come up from her place in Lincolnshire (hotly pursued by the fashionable intelligence), to pass a few days at her house in town previous to her departure for Paris, where her ladyship intends to stay some weeks, after which her movements are uncertain. And at her house in town, upon this muddy, murky afternoon, presents himself an old-fashioned old gentleman, attorney-at-law, and eke solicitor of the High Court of Chancery, who has the honor of acting as legal adviser of the Dedlocks and has as many cast-iron boxes in his office with that name outside, as if the present baronet were the coin of the conjuror's trick, and were constantly being juggled through the whole set. Across the hall, and up the stairs, and along the passages, and through the rooms, which are very brilliant in the season and very dismal out of it — Fairy-land to visit, but a desert to live in — the old gentleman is conducted, by a Mercury in powder, to my Lady's presence.

The old gentleman is rusty to look at, but is reputed to have made good thrift out of aristocratic marriage settlements and aristocratic wills, and to be very rich. He is surrounded by a mysterious halo of family confidences; of which he is known to be the silent depository. There are noble

Mausoleums rooted for centuries in retired glades of parks, among the growing timber and the fern, which perhaps hold fewer noble secrets than walk abroad among men, shut up in the breast of Mr. Tulkinghorn. He is of what is called the old school — a phrase generally meaning any school that seems never to have been young — and wears knee breeches tied with ribbons, and gaiters or stockings. One peculiarity of his black clothes, and of his black stockings, be they silk or worsted, is that they never shine. Mute, close, irresponsible to any glancing light, his dress is like himself. He never converses, when not professionally consulted. He is found sometimes, speechless but quite at home, at corners of dinner-tables in great country houses, and near doors of drawing-rooms, concerning which the fashionable intelligence is eloquent: where everybody knows him, and where half the Peerage stops to say “How do you do, Mr. Tulkinghorn?” He receives these salutations with gravity, and buries them along with the rest of his knowledge.

Sir Leicester Dedlock is with my Lady, and is happy to see Mr. Tulkinghorn.

“My Lady’s cause has been again before the Chancellor, has it, Mr. Tulkinghorn?” says Sir Leicester, giving him his hand.

“Yes. It has been on again to-day,” Mr. Tul-

kinghorn replies, making one of his quiet bows to my Lady who is on a sofa near the fire, shading her face with a hand-screen.

"It would be useless to ask," says my Lady, "whether anything has been done."

"Nothing that *you* would call anything, has been done to-day," replies Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Nor ever will be," says my Lady.

Sir Leicester has no objection to an interminable Chancery suit. It is a slow, expensive, British, constitutional kind of thing. To be sure, he has not a vital interest in the suit in question, her part in which was the only property my Lady brought him; and he has a shadowy impression that for his name — the name of Dedlock — to be in a cause, and not in the title of that cause is a most ridiculous accident. But he regards the Court of Chancery, even if it should involve an occasional delay of justice and a trifling amount of confusion, as a something, devised in conjunction with a variety of other somethings, by the perfection of human wisdom, for the eternal settlement (humanly speaking) of everything.

"As a few fresh affidavits have been put upon the file," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "and as they are short, and as I proceed upon the troublesome principle of begging leave to possess my clients



with any new proceedings in a cause;” cautious man Mr. Tulkinghorn, taking no more responsibility than necessary; “and further, as I see you are going to Paris; I have brought them in my pocket.”

(Sir Leicester was going to Paris too, by-the-by, but the delight of the fashionable intelligence was in his Lady.)

Mr. Tulkinghorn takes out his papers, asks permission to place them on a golden talisman of a table at my Lady’s elbow, puts on his spectacles, and begins to read by the light of a shaded lamp.

“ ‘ In Chancery. Between John Jarndyce —— ’ ”

My Lady interrupts, requesting him to miss as many of the formal horrors as he can.

Mr. Tulkinghorn glances over his spectacles, and begins again lower down. My Lady carelessly and scornfully abstracts her attention. Sir Leicester in a great chair looks at the fire, and appears to have a stately liking for the legal repetitions and prolixities, as ranging among the national bulwarks. It happens that the fire is hot, where my Lady sits; and that the hand-screen is more beautiful than useful, being priceless but small. My Lady, changing her position, sees the papers on the table — looks at them nearer — looks at them nearer still — asks impulsively:

“Who copied that?”

Mr. Tulkinghorn stops short, surprised by my Lady's animation and her unusual tone.

“Is it what you people call law-hand?” she asks, looking full at him in her careless way again, and toying with her screen.

“Not quite. Probably”—Mr. Tulkinghorn examines it as he speaks—“the legal character which it has, was acquired after the original hand was formed. Why do you ask?”

“Anything to vary this detestable monotony. O, go on, do!”

Mr. Tulkinghorn reads again. The heat is greater, my Lady screens her face. Sir Leicester dozes, starts up suddenly, and cries “Eh? what do you say?”

“I say I am afraid,” says Mr. Tulkinghorn, who had risen hastily, “that Lady Dedlock is ill.”

“Faint,” my Lady murmurs, with white lips, “only that; but it is like the faintness of death. Don't speak to me. Ring, and take me to my room!”

Mr. Tulkinghorn retires into another chamber, bells ring, feet shuffle and patter, silence ensues. Mercury at last begs Mr. Tulkinghorn to return.

“Better now,” quoth Sir Leicester, motioning the lawyer to sit down and read to him alone.

"I have been quite alarmed. I never knew my Lady to swoon before. But the weather is extremely trying — and she really has been bored to death down at our place in Lincolnshire."

\* \* \* \* \*

In the eastern borders of Chancery Lane, that is to say, more particularly in Cook's Court, Cursitor Street, Mr. Snagsby, Law-Stationer, pursues his lawful calling.

Mr. Snagsby refers everything not in the practical mysteries of the business to Mrs. Snagsby. She manages the money, reproaches the tax-gatherers, appoints the times and places of devotion on Sunday, licenses Mr. Snagsby's entertainments, and acknowledges no responsibility as to what she thinks fit to provide for dinner; in-somuch that she is the high standard of comparison among the neighboring wives, a long way down Chancery Lane on both sides, and even out in Holborn, who, in any domestic passages of arms, habitually call upon their husbands to look at the difference between their (wives') position and Mrs. Snagsby's, and their (the husbands') behavior and Mr. Snagsby's.

The day is closing in and the gas is lighted, but is not yet fully effective, for it is not quite dark. Mr. Snagsby standing at his shop-door,

looking up at the clouds, sees a crow, who is out late, skim westward over the slice of sky belonging to Cook's Court. The crow flies straight across Chancery Lane and Lincoln's Inn Garden, into Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Here, in a large house, formerly of state, lives Mr. Tulkinghorn. Here, among his many boxes labeled with transcendent names, lives Mr. Tulkinghorn, when not speechlessly at home in country-houses where the great ones of the earth are bored to death. Here he is to-day, quiet at his table. An Oyster of the old school, whom nobody can open.

Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from attention, able to afford it. Heavy broad-backed, old-fashioned mahogany and horsehair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers, presentation prints of the holders of great titles in the last generation, or the last but one, environ him. A thick and dingy Turkey-carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very insufficient light to his large room. The titles on the backs of his books have retired into the binding; everything that can have a lock has got one; no key is visible. Very few loose



papers are about. He has some manuscript near him, but is not referring to it. With the round top of an inkstand, and two broken bits of sealing-wax, he is silently and slowly working out whatever train of indecision is in his mind. Now, the inkstand top is in the middle: now, the red bit of sealing-wax, now the black bit. That's not it. Mr. Tulkinghorn must gather them all up and begin again.

He keeps no staff; only one middle-aged man, usually a little out at elbows, who sits in a high pew in the hall, and is rarely overburdened with business. Mr. Tulkinghorn is not in a common way. He wants no clerks. He is a great reservoir of confidences, not to be so tapped. His clients want *him*; he is all in all. Drafts that he requires to be drawn, are drawn by special pleaders in the Temple on mysterious instructions; fair copies that he requires to be made, are made at the stationers', expense being no consideration. The middle-aged man in the pew knows scarcely more of the affairs of the Peerage than any crossing-sweeper in Holborn.

The red bit, the black bit, the inkstand top, the other inkstand top, the little sand-box. So! You to the middle, you to the right, you to the left. This train of indecision must surely be worked out now or never. — Now! Mr. Tulking-

horn gets up, adjusts his spectacles, puts on his hat, puts the manuscript in his pocket, goes out, tells the middle-aged man out at elbows, "I shall be back presently." Very rarely tells him anything more explicit.

Mr. Tulkinghorn goes, as the crow came — not quite so straight, but nearly — to Cook's Court, Cursitor Street. To Snagsby's, Law Stationer's, Deeds engrossed and copied, Law-writing executed in all its branches, etc., etc., etc.

It is somewhere about five or six o'clock in the afternoon, and a balmy fragrance of warm tea hovers in Cook's Court. Mr. Snagsby was about to descend into the subterranean regions to take tea, when he looked out of his door just now, and saw the crow who was out late.

"Master at home?"

Guster, maid-of-all-work, is minding the shop.

Mr. Snagsby appears: greasy, warm, herbaceous, and chewing. Bolts a bit of bread and butter. Says, "Bless my soul, sir! Mr. Tulkinghorn!"

"I want half a word with you, Snagsby."

"Certainly, sir! Dear me, sir, why didn't you send your young man round for me? Pray walk into the back shop, sir." Snagsby has brightened in a moment.

The confined room, strong of parchment-grease, is ware-house, counting-house, and copying-office.

Mr. Tulkinghorn sits, facing round, on a stool at the desk.

“Jarndyce and Jarndyce, Snagsby.”

“Yes, sir.” Mr. Snagsby turns up the gas, and coughs behind his hand, modestly anticipating profit. Mr. Snagsby, as a timid man, is accustomed to cough with a variety of expression, and so to save words.

“You copied some affidavits in that cause for me lately.”

“Yes, sir, we did.”

“There was one of them,” said Mr. Tulkinghorn, carelessly feeling — tight, unopenable Oyster of the old school! — in the wrong coat-pocket, “the hand-writing of which is peculiar, and I rather like it. As I happened to be passing, and thought I had it about me, I looked in to ask you — but I haven’t got it. No matter, any other time will do — Ah! here it is! — I looked in to ask you who copied this?”

“Who copied this, sir?” says Mr. Snagsby, taking it, laying it flat on the desk, and separating all the sheets at once with a twirl and a twist of the left hand peculiar to law-stationers. “We gave this out, sir. We were giving out rather a large quantity of work just at that time. I can tell you in a moment who copied it, sir, by referring to my book.”

Mr. Snagsby takes his book down from the safe, eyes the affidavit aside, and brings his right forefinger traveling down a page of the book. "Jewby — Packer — Jarndyce."

"Jarndyce! Here we are, sir," says Mr. Snagsby. "To be sure! I might have remembered it. This was given out, sir, to a writer who lodges just over on the opposite side of the lane."

Mr. Tulkinghorn has seen the entry, found it before the law-stationer, read it while the forefinger was coming down the hill.

"*What* do you call him? Nemo?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Nemo, sir. Here it is.

"Nemo!" repeats Mr. Tulkinghorn. "Nemo is Latin for no one."

"It must be English for some one, sir, I think," Mr. Snagsby submits, with his deferential cough. "It is a person's name. Here it is, you see, sir! Forty-two folio. Given out Wednesday night, eight o'clock; brought in Thursday morning, half after nine."

"Half after nine, sir," repeats Mr. Snagsby. "Our law-writers, who live by job-work, are a queer lot; and this may not be his name, but it's the name he goes by. I remember now, sir, that he gives it in a written advertisement he sticks up down at the Rule Office, and the King's Bench



Office, and the Judges' Chambers, and so forth. You know the kind of document, sir — wanting employ? ”

“ Have you given this man work before? ” asks Mr. Tulkinghorn.

“ O dear, yes, sir! Work of yours.”

“ Thinking of more important matters, I forget where you said he lived? ”

“ Across the lane, sir. In fact, he lodges at a — at a rag and bottle shop.”

“ Can you show me the place as I go back? ”

“ With the greatest pleasure, sir! ”

Mr. Snagsby pulls off his sleeves and his gray coat, pulls on his black coat, takes his hat from its peg. “ Oh! here is my little woman! ” he says aloud. “ My dear, will you be so kind as to tell one of the lads to look after the shop, while I step across the lane with Mr. Tulkinghorn? Mrs. Snagsby, sir — I shan't be two minutes, my love! ”

Mrs. Snagsby bends to the lawyer, retires behind the counter, peeps at them through the window-blind, goes softly into the back office, refers to the entries in the book still lying open. Is evidently curious.

“ You will find that the place is rough, sir,” says Mr. Snagsby, walking deferentially in the road, and leaving the narrow pavement to the lawyer; “ and the party is very rough. But

they're a wild lot in general, sir. The advantage of this particular man is, that he never wants sleep. He'll go at it right on end, if you want him to, as long as ever you like."

It is quite dark, now, and the gas-lamps have acquired their full effect. The lawyer and the law-stationer come to a rag and bottle shop, and general emporium of much disregarded merchandise, lying and being in the shadow of the wall of Lincoln's Inn, and kept, as is announced in paint, to all whom it may concern, by one Krook.

"This is where he lives, sir," says the law-stationer.

"This is where he lives, is it?" says the lawyer unconcernedly. "Thank you."

"Are you not going in, sir?"

"No, thank you, no; I am going on to the Fields at present. Good-evening. Thank you!" Mr. Snagsby lifts his hat, and returns to his little woman and his tea.

But Mr. Tulkinghorn does not go on to the Fields at present. He goes a short way, turns back, comes again to the shop of Mr. Krook, and enters it straight. It is dim enough, with a blot-headed candle or so in the windows, and an old man and a cat sitting in the back part by a fire. The old man rises and comes forward, with another blot-headed candle in his hand.

"Pray is your lodger within?"

"Male or female, sir?" says Mr. Krook.

"Male. The person who does copying."

Mr. Krook has eyed his man narrowly. Knows him by sight. Has an indistinct impression of his aristocratic repute.

"Did you wish to see him, sir?"

"Yes."

"It's what I seldom do myself," says Mr. Krook with a grin. "Shall I call him down? But it's a weak chance if he'd come, sir!"

"I'll go up to him, then," says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Second floor, sir. Take the candle. Up there!" Mr. Krook, with his cat beside him, stands at the bottom of the staircase, looking after Mr. Tulkinghorn. "Hi — hi!" he says, when Mr. Tulkinghorn has nearly disappeared. The lawyer looks down over the hand-rail. The cat expands her wicked mouth, and snarls at him.

"Order, Lady Jane! Behave yourself to visitors, my lady! You know what they say of my lodger?" whispers Krook, going up a step or two.

"What do they say of him?"

"They say he has sold himself to the Enemy; but you and I know better — he don't buy. I'll tell you what, though; my lodger is so black-

humored and gloomy, that I believe he'd as soon make that bargain as any other. Don't put him out, sir. That's my advice! "

Mr. Tulkinghorn with a nod goes on his way. He comes to the dark door on the second floor. He knocks, receives no answer, opens it, and accidentally extinguishes his candle in doing so.

The air of the room is almost bad enough to have extinguished it, if he had not. It is a small room, nearly black with soot, and grease, and dirt. In the rusty skeleton of a grate, pinched at the middle as if poverty had gripped it, a red coke fire burns low. In the corner by the chimney, stand a deal table and a broken desk; a wilderness marked with a rain of ink. In another corner, a ragged old portmanteau on one of the two chairs, serves for cabinet or wardrobe; no larger one is needed, for it collapses like the cheeks of a starved man. The floor is bare; except that one old mat, trodden to shreds of rope-yarn, lies perishing upon the hearth. No curtain veils the darkness of the night, but the discolored shutters are drawn together; and through the two gaunt holes pierced in them, famine might be staring in — the Banshee of the man upon the bed.

For, on a low bed opposite the fire, a confusion of dirty patchwork, lean-ribbed ticking, and coarse sacking, the lawyer, hesitating just within the door-



way, sees a man. He lies there dressed in shirt and trousers, with bare feet. He has a yellow look in the spectral darkness of a candle that has guttered down, until the whole length of its wick (still burning) has doubled over, and left a tower of winding-sheet above it. His hair is ragged, mingling with his whiskers and his beard — the latter, ragged too, and grown, like the scum and mist around him, in neglect. Foul and filthy as the room is, foul and filthy as the air is, it is not easy to perceive what fumes those are which most oppress the senses in it; but through the general sickliness and faintness, and the odor of stale tobacco, there comes into the lawyer's mouth the bitter, vapid taste of opium.

"Hallo, my friend!" he cries, and strikes his iron candlestick against the door.

He thinks he has awakened his friend. He lies a little turned away, but his eyes are surely open.

"Hallo, my friend!" he cries again. "Hallo! Hallo!"

As he rattles on the door, the candle, which has drooped so long, goes out, and leaves him in the dark; with the gaunt eyes in the shutters staring down upon the bed. A touch on the lawyer's wrinkled hand, as he stands in the dark room, irresolute, makes him start and say "What's that?"

"It's me," returns the old man of the house, whose breath is in his ear. "Can't you wake him? "

"No."

"What have you done with your candle? "

"It's gone out. Here it is."

Krook takes it, goes to the fire, stoops over the red embers, and tries to get a light. The dying ashes have no light to spare, and his endeavors are vain. Muttering, after an ineffectual call to his lodger, that he will go downstairs and bring a lighted candle from the shop, the old man departs. Mr. Tulkinghorn, for some new reason that he has, does not await his return in the room, but on the stairs outside.

The welcome light soon shines upon the wall, as Krook comes slowly up, with his green-eyed cat following at his heels. "Does the man generally sleep like this? " inquires the lawyer, in a low voice. "Hi! I don't know," says Krook, shaking his head and lifting his eyebrows. "I know next to nothing of his habits, except that he keeps himself very close."

Thus whispering, they both go in together. As the light goes in, the great eyes in the shutters, darkening, seem to close. Not so the eyes upon the bed.

"God save us! " exclaimed Mr. Tulkinghorn.

“He is dead!”

Krook drops the heavy hand he has taken up, so suddenly that the arm swings over the bedside.

They look at one another for a moment.

“Send for some doctor! Call for Miss Flite up the stairs, sir. Here’s poison by the bed! Call out for Flite, will you?” says Krook, with his lean hands spread out above the body like a vampire’s wings.

Mr. Tulkinghorn hurries to the landing, and calls “Miss Flite! Flite! Make haste, here, whoever you are! Flite!” Krook follows him with his eyes, and, while he is calling, finds opportunity to steal to the old portmanteau, and steal back again.

“Run, Flite, run! The nearest doctor! Run!” So Mr. Krook addresses a crazy little woman, who is his female lodger: who appears and vanishes in a breath: who soon returns, accompanied by a testy medical man, brought from his dinner — with a broad snuffy lip, and a broad Scotch tongue.

“Ey! Bless the hearts o’ye,” says the medical man, looking up at them after a moment’s examination. “He’s just as dead as Phairy!”

Mr. Tulkinghorn (standing by the old portmanteau) inquires if he has been dead any time?

“Any time, sir?” says the medical gentleman.

"It's probable he wull have been dead aboot three hours."

"About that time, I should say," observes a dark young man, on the other side of the bed.

"Air you in the maydickle prayfession yourself, sir?" inquires the first.

The dark young man says yes.

"Then I'll just tak' my depairture," replies the other; "for I'm nae gude here!" With which remark, he finishes his brief attendance, and returns to finish his dinner.

The dark young surgeon passes the candle across and across the face, and carefully examines the law-writer, who has established his pretentions to his name by becoming indeed No one.

"I knew this person by sight, very well," says he. "He has purchased opium of me, for the last year and a half. Was anybody present related to him?" glancing round upon the three bystanders.

"I was his landlord," grimly answers Krook, taking the candle from the surgeon's outstretched hand. "He told me once, I was the nearest relation he had."

"He has died," says the surgeon, "of an overdose of opium, there is no doubt. The room is strongly flavored with it. There is enough here



now," taking an old tea-pot from Mr. Krook, "to kill a dozen people."

"Do you think he did it on purpose?" asks Krook.

"Took the over-dose?"

"Yes!" Krook almost smacks his lips with the unction of a horrible interest.

"I can't say. I should think it unlikely, as he has been in the habit of taking so much. But nobody can tell. He was very poor, I suppose?"

"I suppose he was. His room—don't look rich," says Krook, who might have changed eyes with his cat, as he casts his sharp glance around. "But I have never been in it since he had it, and he was too close to name his circumstances to me."

"Did he owe you any rent?"

"Six weeks."

"He will never pay it!" says the young man, resuming his examination. "It is beyond a doubt that he is indeed as dead as Pharaoh; and to judge from his appearance and condition, I should think it a happy release. Yet he must have been a good figure when a youth, and I dare say, good-looking." He says this, not unfeelingly, while sitting on the bedstead's edge, with his face towards that other face, and his hand upon the region of the heart. "I recollect once thinking there was

something in his manner, uncouth as it was, that denoted a fall in life. Was that so?" he continues, looking round.

Krook replies, "You might as well ask me to describe the ladies whose heads of hair I have got in sacks downstairs. Than that he was my lodger for a year and a half, and lived — or didn't live — by law-writing, I know no more of him."

During this dialogue, Mr. Tulkinghorn has stood aloof by the old portmanteau, with his hands behind him, equally removed, to all appearance, from all three kinds of interest exhibited near the bed — from the young surgeon's professional interest in death, noticeable as being quite apart from his remarks on the deceased as an individual; from the old man's unction; and the little crazy woman's awe. His imperturbable face has been as inexpressive as his rusty clothes. One could not even say he has been thinking all this while.

He now interposes; addressing the young surgeon, in his unmoved, professional way.

"I looked in here," he observes, "just before you, with the intention of giving this deceased man, whom I never saw alive, some employment at his trade of copying. I had heard of him from my stationer — Snagsby of Cook's Court. Since no one here knows anything about him, it might be as well to send for Snagsby. Ah!" to the little

crazy woman, who has often seen him in court, and whom he has often seen, and who proposes, in frightened dumb-show, to go for the law-stationer. "Suppose you do!"

While she is gone, the surgeon abandons his hopeless investigation, and covers its subject with the patchwork counterpane. Mr. Krook and he interchange a word or two. Mr. Tulkinghorn says nothing; but stands, ever, near the old port-manteau.

Mr. Snagsby arrives hastily, in his gray coat and black sleeves. "Dear me, dear me," he says; "and it has come to this, has it! Bless my soul!"

"Can you give the person of the house any information about this unfortunate creature, Snagsby?" inquires Mr. Tulkinghorn. "He was in arrears with his rent, it seems. And he must be buried, you know."

"Well, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, coughing his apologetic cough behind his hand; "I really don't know what advice you could offer, except sending for the beadle."

"I don't speak of advice," returns Mr. Tulkinghorn. "I could advise ——"

"No one better, sir, I am sure," says Mr. Snagsby, with his deferential cough.

"I speak of affording some clew to his con-

nections, or to where he came from, or to anything concerning him."

"I assure you, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, after prefacing his reply with his cough of general propitiation, "that I know no more where he came from than I know ——"

"Where he has gone to, perhaps," suggests the surgeon to help him out.

A pause. Mr. Tulkinghorn looking at the law-stationer. Mr. Krook, with his mouth open, looking for somebody to speak next.

"As to his connections, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, "if a person was to say to me, 'Snagsby, here's twenty thousand pound down, ready for you in the Bank of England, if you'll only name one of them,' I couldn't do it, sir! About a year and a half ago — to the best of my belief at the time when he first came to lodge at the present rag and bottle shop ——"

"That was the time!" says Krook, with a nod.

"About a year and a half ago," says Mr. Snagsby, strengthened, "he came into our place one morning after breakfast, and, finding my little woman (which I name Mrs. Snagsby when I use that appellation) in our shop, produced a specimen of his handwriting, and gave her to understand that he was in want of copying work to do, and was — not to put too fine a point upon it —



hard up! My little woman is not in general partial to strangers, particular — not to put too fine a point upon it — when they want anything. But she was rather took by something about his person; whether by his being unshaved, or by his hair being in want of attention, or by what other ladies' reasons, I leave you to judge; and she accepted of the specimen, and likewise of the address. My little woman hasn't a good ear for names," proceeds Mr. Snagsby, after consulting his cough of consideration behind his hand, "and she considered Nemo equally the same as Nimrod. In consequence of which, she got into a habit of saying to me at meals, 'Mr. Snagsby, you haven't found Nimrod any work yet?' or 'Mr. Snagsby, why didn't you give that eight-and-thirty Chancery folio in Jarndyce, to Nimrod?' or such like. And that is the way he gradually fell into job-work at our place; and that is the most I know of him, except that he was a quick hand, and a hand not sparing of night work; and that if you gave him out, say five-and-forty folio on the Wednesday night, you would have it brought in on the Thursday morning. All of which" — Mr. Snagsby concludes by politely motioning with his hat towards the bed, as much as to add — "I have no doubt my honorable friend would confirm, if he were in a condition to do it."

"Hadn't you better see," says Mr. Tulkinghorn to Krook, "whether he had any papers that may enlighten you? There will be an inquest, and you will be asked the question. You can read?"

"No, I can't," returns the old man, with a sudden grin.

"Snagsby," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "look over the room for him. He will get into some trouble or difficulty, otherwise. Being here, I'll wait, if you make haste; and then I can testify on his behalf, if it should ever be necessary, that all was fair and right. If you will hold the candle for Mr. Snagsby, my friend, he'll soon see whether there is anything to help you."

"In the first place, here's an old portmanteau, sir," says Snagsby.

Ah, to be sure, so there is! Mr. Tulkinghorn does not appear to have seen it before, though he is standing so close to it, and though there is very little else, Heaven knows.

The marine-store merchant holds the light, and the law stationer conducts the search. The surgeon leans against the corner of the chimney-piece; Miss Flite peeps and trembles just within the door. The apt old scholar of the old school, with his dull black breeches tied with ribbons at the knees, his large black waistcoat, his long-sleeved black

coat, and his wisp of limp white neckerchief tied in the bow the Peerage knows so well, stands in exactly the same place and attitude.

There are some worthless articles of clothing in the old portmanteau; there is a bundle of pawn-brokers' duplicates, those turnpike tickets on the road of Poverty; there is a crumpled paper smell of opium, on which are scrawled rough memoranda — as, took, such a day, so many grains; took, such another day, so many more — begun some time ago, as if with the intention of being regularly continued, but soon left off. There are a few dirty scraps of newspapers, all referring to Coroners' inquests; there is nothing else. They search the cupboard, and the drawer of the ink-splashed table. There is not a morsel of an old letter, or of any other writing, in either. The young surgeon examines the dress on the law-writer. A knife and some odd halfpence are all he finds. Mr. Snagsby's suggestion is the practical suggestion after all, and the beadle must be called in.

So the little crazy lodger goes for the beadle, and the rest come out of the room. "Don't leave the cat there!" says the surgeon: "that won't do!" Mr. Krook therefore drives her out before him; and she goes furtively downstairs, winding her little tail, and licking her lips.

“ Good-night! ” says Mr. Tulkinghorn; and goes home to meditation.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Coroner's inquest Mr. Tulkinghorn is received with distinction, and seated near the Coroner. The inquiry proceeds. The Jury learn how the subject of their inquiry died, and learn no more about him. “ A very eminent solicitor is in attendance, gentlemen,” says the Coroner, “ who, I am informed, was accidentally present, when discovery of the death was made; but he could only repeat the evidence you have already heard from the surgeon, the landlord, the lodger, and the law-stationer; and it is not necessary to trouble him. Is anybody in attendance who knows anything more? ”

Mrs. Piper pushed forward by Mrs. Perkins. Mrs. Piper sworn.

Anastasia Piper, gentlemen. Married woman. Now, Mrs. Piper — what have you to say about this?

Why, Mrs. Piper has a good deal to say, chiefly in parenthesis and without punctuation, but not much to tell. Mrs. Piper lives in the court (which her husband is a cabinetmaker), and it has long been well bekknown among the neighbors (counting from the day next but one before the half-



baptizing of Alexander James Piper aged eighteen months and four days old on accounts of not being expected to live such was the sufferings gentlemen of that child in his gums) as the Plaintiff — so Mrs. Piper insists on calling the deceased — was reported to have sold himself. Thinks it was the Plaintiff's air in which that report originated. See the Plaintiff often and considered as his air was ferocious and not to be allowed to go about some children being timid (and if doubted hoping Mrs. Perkins may be brought forward for she is here and will do credit to her husband and herself and family). Has seen the Plaintiff vexed and worried by the children (for children they will ever be and you cannot expect them specially if of playful dispositions to be Methoosellers which you was not yourself). On accounts of this and his dark looks has often dreamed as she see him take a pick-axe from his pocket and split Johnny's head (which the child knows not fear and has repeatedly called after him close at his heels). Never however see the Plaintiff take a pick-axe or any other weapon far from it. Has seen him hurry away when run and called after as if not partial to children and never see him speak to neither child nor grown person at any time (excepting the boy that sweeps the crossing down the lane over the way round the corner which if he was here

would tell you that he has been a-speaking to him frequent).

Says the Coroner, is that boy here? Says the beadle, no, sir, he is not here. Says the Coroner, go and fetch him then. In the absence of the active and intelligent, the Coroner converses with Mr. Tulkinghorn.

O! Here's the boy, gentlemen!

Here he is, very muddy, very hoarse, very ragged. Now, boy! — But stop a minute. Caution. This boy must be put through a few preliminary paces.

Name, Jo. Nothing else that he knows on. Don't know that everybody has two names. Never heerd of such a think. Don't know that Jo is short for a longer name. Thinks it long enough for *him*. *He* don't find no fault with it. Spell it? No. He can't spell it. No father, no mother, no friends. Never been to school. What's home? Knows a broom's a broom, and knows it's wicked to tell a lie. Don't recollect who told him about the broom, or about the lie, but knows both. Can't exactly say what'll be done to him arter he's dead if he tells a lie to the gentlemen here, but believes it'll be something wery bad to punish him, and serve him right — and so he'll tell you the truth.

“This won't do, gentlemen!” says the Coroner, with a melancholy shake of the head.

“Don’t you think you can receive his evidence, sir?” asks an attentive Juryman.

“Out of the question,” says the Coroner. “You have heard the boy. ‘Can’t exactly say’ won’t do, you know. We can’t take *that*, in a Court of Justice, gentlemen. It’s terrible depravity. Put the boy aside.”

Boy put aside; to the great edification of the audience; — especially of Little Swills, the Comic Vocalist.

Now. Is there any other witness? No other witness.

Very well, gentlemen! Here’s a man unknown, proved to have been in the habit of taking opium in large quantities for a year and a half, found dead of too much opium. If you think you have any evidence to lead you to the conclusion that he committed suicide, you will come to that conclusion. If you think it is a case of accidental death, you will find a Verdict accordingly.

Verdict accordingly. Accidental death. No doubt. Gentlemen, you are discharged. Good afternoon.

While the Coroner buttons his great-coat, Mr. Tulkinghorn and he give private audience to the rejected witness in a corner.

That graceless creature only knows that the dead man (whom he recognized just now by his yellow face and black hair) was sometimes hooted and

pursued about the streets. That one cold, winter night, when he, the boy, was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, the man turned to look at him, and came back, and, having questioned him and found that he had not a friend in the world, said, "Neither have I. Not one!" and gave him the price of a supper and a night's lodging. That the man had often spoken to him since; and asked him whether he slept sound at night, and how he bore cold and hunger, and whether he ever wished to die; and similar strange questions. That when the man had no money, he would say in passing, "I am as poor as you to-day, Jo," but that when he had any, he had always (as the boy most heartily believes) been glad to give him some.

"He wos wery good to me," says the boy, wiping his eyes with his wretched sleeves. "Wen I see him a-layin' so stritched out just now, I wished he could have heerd me tell him so. He wos wery good to me, he wos!"

As he shuffles downstairs, Mr. Snagsby, lying in wait for him, puts a half-crown in his hand. "If you ever see me coming past your crossing with my little woman — I mean a lady —" says Mr. Snagsby, with his finger on his nose, "don't allude to it!"

Daylight comes, morning comes, noon comes.

Then the active and intelligent, who has got



into the morning papers as such, comes with his pauper company to Mr. Krook's, and bears off the body of our dear brother here departed, to a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene. Into a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination, and a Caffre would shudder at, they bring our dear brother here departed, to receive Christian burial.

With houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate — with every villainy of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life — here, they lower our dear brother down a foot or two; here, sow him in corruption, to be raised in corruption: an avenging ghost at many a sick-bedside; a shameful testimony to future ages, how civilization and barbarism walked this boastful island together.

With the night, comes a slouching figure through the tunnel-court to the outside of the iron gate. It holds the gate with its hands, and looks in between the bars; stands looking in, for a little while.

It then, with an old broom it carries, softly sweeps the step, and makes the archway clean. It does so, very busily and trimly; looks in again, a little while; and so departs.

Jo, it is thou? Well, well! Though a rejected witness, who "can't exactly say" what will be

done to him in greater hands than men's, thou art not quite in outer darkness. There is something like a distant ray of light in thy muttered reason for this:

“ He wos wery good to me, he wos! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

It has left off raining down in Lincolnshire, at last, and Chesney Wold has taken heart. Mrs. Rouncewell, housekeeper, is full of hospitable cares, for Sir Leicester and my Lady are coming home from Paris.

Through the same cold sunshine, and the same sharp wind, my Lady and Sir Leicester, in their traveling chariot (my Lady's woman, and Sir Leicester's man affectionate in the rumble), start for home. With a considerable amount of jingling and whip-cracking, and many plunging demonstrations on the part of two bare-backed horses, and two Centaurs with glazed hats, jack-boots, and flowing manes and tails, they rattle out of the yard of the Hôtel Bristol in the Place Vendôme, and canter between the sun-and-shadow-chequered colonnade of the Rue de Rivoli and the garden of the ill-fated palace of a headless king and queen, off by the Place of Concord, and the Elysian Fields, and the Gate of the Star, out of Paris.

My Lady Dedlock cannot go too fast from



Paris. Weariness of soul lies before her, as it lies behind — her Ariel has put a girdle of it round the whole earth, and it cannot be unclasped — but the imperfect remedy is always to fly, from the last place where it has been experienced. Fling Paris back into the distance, then, exchanging it for endless avenues and cross-avenues of wintry trees! And, when next beheld, let it be some leagues away, with the Gate of the Star a white speck glittering in the sun, and the city a mere mound in a plain; two dark square towers rising out of it, and light and shadow descending on it aslant, like the angels in Jacob's dream!

Sir Leicester is generally in a complacent state, and rarely bored. After reading his letters, he leans back in his corner of the traveling carriage, and generally reviews his importance to society.

"You have an unusual amount of correspondence this morning?" says my Lady after a long time.

"Nothing in it, though. Nothing whatever."

"I saw one of Mr. Tulkinghorn's long effusions, I think?"

"You see everything," says Sir Leicester, with admiration.

"Ha!" sighs my Lady, "he is the most tiresome of men!"

“He sends—I really beg your pardon—he sends,” says Sir Leicester, selecting the letter and unfolding it, “a message to you. He says, ‘In the matter of the right of way——’ I beg your pardon, that’s not the place. He says—yes! Here I have it! He says, ‘I beg my respectful compliments to my Lady, who, I hope, has benefited by the change. Will you do me the favor to mention (as it may interest her) that I have something to tell her on her return, in reference to the person who copied the affidavit in the Chancery suit, which so powerfully stimulated her curiosity. I have seen him.’ ”

My Lady, leaning forward, looks out of her window.

“That’s the message,” observes Sir Leicester.

“I should like to walk a little,” says my Lady, still looking out of the window.

“Walk?” repeats Sir Leicester, in a tone of surprise.

“I should like to walk a little,” says my Lady, with unmistakable distinctness. “Please to stop the carriage.”

The carriage is stopped, the affectionate man alights from the rumble, opens the door, and lets down the steps, obedient to an impatient motion of my Lady’s hand. My Lady alights so quickly, and walks away so quickly, that Sir

Leicester, for all his scrupulous politeness, is unable to assist her, and is left behind. A space of a minute or two has elapsed before he comes up with her. She smiles, looks very handsome, takes his arm, lounges with him for a quarter of a mile, is very much bored, and resumes her seat in the carriage.

The rattle and clatter continue through the greater part of three days, with more or less of bell-jingling and whip-cracking, and more or less plunging of Centaurs and bare-backed horses.

The sea has no appreciation of great men, but knocks them about like the small fry. It is habitually hard upon Sir Leicester, whose countenance it greenly mottles in the manner of sage-cheese, and in whose aristocratic system it effects a dismal revolution. It is the Radical of Nature to him. Nevertheless, his dignity gets over it, after stopping to refit; and he goes on with my Lady for Chesney Wold, lying only one night in London on the way to Lincolnshire.

Through the same cold sunlight — colder as the day declines, — and through the same sharp wind — sharper as the separate shadows of bare trees gloom together in the woods, and as the Ghost's Walk, touched at the western corner by a pile of fire in the sky, resigns itself to coming night, — they drive into the park. The traveling chariot

rolls on to the house; where fires gleam warmly through some of the windows, though not through so many as to give an inhabited expression to the darkening mass in front.

Mrs. Rouncewell is in attendance, and receives Sir Leicester's customary shake of the hand with a profound courtesy.

"How do you do, Mrs. Rouncewell? I am glad to see you."

"I hope I have the honor of welcoming you in good health, Sir Leicester? "

"In excellent health, Mrs. Rouncewell."

"My Lady is looking charmingly well," says Mrs. Rouncewell, with another courtesy.

My Lady signifies, without profuse expenditure of words, that she is as wearily well as she can hope to be.

My Lady's maid is a Frenchwoman of two-and-thirty, from somewhere in the southern country about Avignon and Marseilles — a large-eyed brown woman with black hair; who would be handsome, but for a certain feline mouth, and general uncomfortable tightness of the face, rendering the jaws too eager, and the skull too prominent. There is something indefinably keen and wan about her anatomy; and she has a watchful way of looking out of the corners of her eyes with-



out turning her head, which could be pleasantly dispensed with — especially when she is in an ill-humor and near knives. Through all the good taste of her dress and little adornments, these objections so express themselves, that she seems to go about like a very neat She-Wolf imperfectly tamed. Besides being accomplished in all the knowledge appertaining to her post, she is almost an English-woman in her acquaintance with the language.

Chesney Wold is quite full, within a week or two, so full, that a burning sense of injury arises in the breasts of ill-lodged ladies'-maids, and is not to be extinguished. Only one room is empty. It is a turret chamber of the third order of merit, plainly, but comfortably furnished, and having an old-fashioned business air. It is Mr. Tulkinghorn's room, and is never bestowed on anybody else, for he may come at any time. He is not come yet. It is his quiet habit to walk across the park from the village in fine weather; to drop into this room, as if he had never been out of it since he was last seen there; to request a servant to inform Sir Leicester that he is arrived, in case he should be wanted; and to appear ten minutes before dinner, in the shadow of the library-door. He sleeps in his turret, with a complaining flag-staff

over his head; and has some leads outside, on which, any fine morning when he is down here, his black figure may be seen walking before breakfast like a larger species of rook.

Every night, my Lady casually asks her maid: "Is Mr. Tulkinghorn come?"

Every night the answer is, "No, my Lady, not yet."

One night, while having her hair undressed, my Lady loses herself in deep thought after this reply, until she sees her own brooding face, in the opposite glass, and a pair of black eyes curiously observing her.

"Be so good as to attend," says my Lady then, addressing the reflection of Hortense, "to your business. You can contemplate your beauty at another time."

"Pardon! It was your Ladyship's beauty."

"That," says my Lady, "you needn't contemplate at all."

At length, one afternoon a little before sunset, when the bright groups of figures, which have for the last hour or two enlivened the Ghost's Walk, are all dispersed, and only Sir Leicester and my Lady remain upon the terrace, Mr. Tulkinghorn appears. He comes towards them at his usual methodical pace, which is never quickened, never slackened. He wears his usual expressionless



mask — if it be a mask — and carries family secrets in every limb of his body, and every crease of his dress.

“How do you do, Mr. Tulkinghorn?” says Sir Leicester, giving him his hand.

Mr. Tulkinghorn is quite well. Sir Leicester, is quite well. My Lady is quite well. All highly satisfactory. The lawyer, with his hands behind him, walks, at Sir Leicester’s side, along the terrace. My Lady walks upon the other side.

“We expected you before,” says Sir Leicester.

“I should have come down sooner,” he explains, “but that I have been much engaged with those matters in the several suits between yourself and Boythorn.”

“A man of a very ill-regulated mind,” observes Sir Leicester, with severity. “An extremely dangerous person in any community. A man of a very low character of mind.”

“A person who, fifty years ago, would probably have been tried at the Old Bailey for some demagogue proceeding, and severely punished — if not,” adds Sir Leicester, after a moment’s pause, “if not hanged, drawn, and quartered.”

Sir Leicester appears to discharge his stately breast of a burden, in passing this capital sentence; as if it were the next satisfactory thing to have the sentence executed.

"But night is coming on," says he, "and my Lady will take cold. My dear, let us go in."

As they turn towards the hall-door, Lady Dedlock addresses Mr. Tulkinghorn for the first time.

"You sent me a message respecting the person whose writing I happened to inquire about. It was like you to remember the circumstance; I had quite forgotten it. Your message reminded me of it again. I can't imagine what association I had with a hand like that; but I surely had some."

"You had some?" Mr. Tulkinghorn repeats.

"O yes!" returns my Lady carelessly. "I think I must have had some. And did you really take the trouble to find out the writer of that actual thing — what is it! — affidavit?"

"Yes."

"How very odd!"

They pass into a somber breakfast-room on the ground floor, lighted in the day by two deep windows. It is now twilight. The fire glows brightly on the paneled wall, and palely on the window-glass, where, through the cold reflection of the blaze, the colder landscape shudders in the wind, and a gray mist creeps along: the only traveler besides the waste of clouds.

My Lady lounges in a great chair in the chimney-corner, and Sir Leicester takes another great chair opposite. The lawyer stands before the fire, with

his hand at arm's length, shading his face. He looks across his arm at my Lady.

"Yes," he says, "I inquired about the man, and found him. And, what is very strange, I found him ——"

"Not to be any out-of-the-way person, I am afraid!" Lady Dedlock anticipates.

"I found him dead."

"O dear me!" remonstrated Sir Leicester. Not so much shocked by the fact, as by the fact of the fact being mentioned.

"I was directed to his lodging — a miserable, poverty-stricken place — and I found him dead."

"You will excuse me, Mr. Tulkinghorn," observes Sir Leicester. "I think the less said ——"

"Pray, Sir Leicester, let me hear the story out" (it is my Lady speaking). "It is quite a story for twilight. How very shocking! Dead?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn re-asserts it by another inclination of his head. "Whether by his own hand ——"

"Upon my honor!" cries Sir Leicester. "Really!"

"Do let me hear the story;" says my Lady.

"Whatever you desire, my dear. But, I must say ——"

"No, you mustn't say! Go on, Mr. Tulkinghorn."

Sir Leicester's gallantry concedes the point; though he still feels that to bring this sort of squalor among the upper classes is really — really ——

"I was about to say," resumes the lawyer, with undisturbed calmness, "that whether he had died by his own hand or not, it was beyond my power to tell you. I should amend that phrase, however, by saying that he had unquestionably died of his own act, though whether by his own deliberate intention, or by mischance, can never certainly be known. The coroner's jury found that he took the poison accidentally."

"And what kind of man," my Lady asks, "was this deplorable creature?"

"Very difficult to say," returns the lawyer, shaking his head. "He had lived so wretchedly, and was so neglected, with his gypsy color, and his wild black hair and beard, that I should have considered him the commonest of the common. The surgeon had a notion that he had once been something better, both in appearance and condition."

"What did they call the wretched being?"

"They called him what he had called himself, but no one knew his name."

"Not even anyone who had attended on him?"

"No one had attended on him. He was found dead. In fact, I found him."



“Without any clew to anything more?”

“Without any; there was,” says the lawyer meditatively, “an old portmanteau; but — No, there were no papers.”

During the utterance of every word of this short dialogue, Lady Dedlock and Mr. Tulkinghorn, without any other alteration in their customary deportment, have looked very steadily at one another — as was natural, perhaps, in the discussion of so unusual a subject. Sir Leicester has looked at the fire, with the general expression of the Dedlock on the staircase. The story being told, he renews his stately protest, saying, that it is quite clear that no association in my Lady’s mind can possibly be traceable to this poor wretch (unless he was a begging letter writer); he trusts to hear no more about a subject so far removed from my Lady’s station.

“Certainly, a collection of horrors,” says my Lady, gathering up her mantles and furs; “but they interest one for the moment! Have the kindness, Mr. Tulkinghorn, to open the door for me.”

Mr. Tulkinghorn does so with deference, and holds it open while she passes out. She passes close to him, with her usual fatigued manner, and insolent grace. They meet again at dinner — again, next day — again for many days in suc-

cession. Lady Dedlock is always the same exhausted deity, surrounded by worshipers, and terribly liable to be bored to death, even while presiding at her own shrine. Mr. Tulkinghorn is always the same speechless repository of noble confidences: so oddly out of place, and yet so perfectly at home. They appear to take as little note of one another, as any two people, inclosed within the same walls, could. But, whether each evermore watches and suspects the other, evermore mistrustful of some great reservation; whether each is evermore prepared at all points for the other, and never to be taken unawares; what each would give to know how much the other knows — all this is hidden, for the time, in their own hearts.

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My Lady Dedlock is restless, very restless. The astonished fashionable intelligence hardly knows where to have her. To-day, she is at Chesney Wold; yesterday she was at her house in town; to-morrow, she may be abroad, for anything the fashionable intelligence can with confidence predict. Even Sir Leicester's gallantry has some trouble to keep pace with her. It would have more, but that his other faithful ally, for better and for worse — the gout — darts into the oak bed-



chamber at Chesney Wold, and grips him by both legs.

My Lady is at present represented, near Sir Leicester, by her portrait. She has flitted away to town, with no intention of remaining there, and will soon flit hither again, to the confusion of the fashionable intelligence. The house in town is not prepared for her reception. It is muffled and dreary. Only one Mercury in powder, gapes disconsolate at the hall-window; and he mentioned last night to another Mercury of his acquaintance, also accustomed to good society, that if that sort of thing was to last — which it couldn't, for a man of his spirits couldn't bear it, and a man of his figure couldn't be expected to bear it — there would be no resource for him, upon his honor, but to cut his throat!

What connection can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connection can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!

Jo sweeps his crossing all day long, unconscious

of the link, if any link there be. He sums up his mental condition, when asked a question, by replying that he "don't know nothink." He knows that it's hard to keep the mud off the crossing in dirty weather, and harder still to live by doing it. Nobody taught him even that much; he found it out.

Jo lives — that is to say, Jo has not yet died — in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings.

He goes to his crossing, and begins to lay it out for the day. The town awakes.

The day changes as it wears itself away, and becomes dark and drizzly. Jo fights it out, at his crossing, among the mud and wheels, the horses, whips, and umbrellas, and gets but a scanty sum to pay for the unsavory shelter of Tom-all-Alone's. Twilight comes on; gas begins to start up in the shops; the lamplighter, with his ladder, runs along the margin of the pavement. A wretched evening is beginning to close in.

In his chambers, Mr. Tulkinghorn sits meditating an application to the nearest magistrate to-

morrow morning for a warrant. Gridley, a disappointed suitor, has been here to-day, and has been alarming. We are not to be put in bodily fear, and that ill-conditioned fellow shall be held to bail again. From the ceiling, fore-shortened Allegory, in the person of one impossible Roman upside down, points with the arm of Samson (out of joint and an odd one) obtrusively towards the window. Why should Mr. Tulkinghorn, for no such reason, look out of window? Is the hand not always pointing there? So he does not look out of window.

And if he did, what would it be to see a woman going by? There are women enough in the world. Mr. Tulkinghorn thinks — too many; they are at the bottom of all that goes wrong in it, though, for the matter of that, they create business for lawyers. What would it be to see a woman going by, even though she were going secretly? They are all secret. Mr. Tulkinghorn knows that very well.

But they are not all like the woman who now leaves him and his house behind; between whose plain dress, and her refined manner, there is something exceedingly inconsistent. She should be an upper servant by her attire, yet, in her air and step, though both are hurried and assumed — as far as she can assume in the muddy streets, which she treads with an unaccustomed foot — she is a

lady. Her face is veiled, and still she sufficiently betrays herself to make more than one of those who pass her look round sharply.

She never turns her head. Lady or servant, she has a purpose in her, and can follow it. She never turns her head, until she comes to the crossing where Jo plies with his broom. He crosses with her, and begs. Still, she does not turn her head until she has landed on the other side. Then, she slightly beckons to him, and says "Come here!"

Jo follows her, a pace or two, into a quiet court.

"Are you the boy I've read of in the papers?" she asked behind her veil.

"I don't know," says Jo, staring moodily at the veil, "nothink about no papers. I don't know nothink about nothink, at all."

"Were you examined at an inquest?"

"I don't know nothink about no — where I was took by the beadle, do you mean?" says Jo. "Was the boy's name at the inkwhich, Jo?"

"Yes."

"That's me!" says Jo.

"Come farther up."

"You mean about the man?" says Jo, following. "Him as was dead?"

"Hush! Speak in a whisper! Yes. Did he look, when he was living, so very ill and poor?"

"O jist!" says Jo.



"Did he look like — not like *you?*" says the woman, with abhorrence.

"O not so bad as me," says Jo. "I'm a reg'lar one *I* am! You didn't know him, did you?"

"How dare you ask me if I knew him?"

"No offense, my lady," says Jo, with much humility; for even he has got at the suspicion of her being a lady.

"I am not a lady. I am a servant."

"You are a jolly servant!" says Jo; without the least idea of saying anything offensive; merely as a tribute of admiration.

"Listen and be silent. Don't talk to me, and stand farther from me! Can you show me all those places that were spoken of in the account I read? The place he wrote for, the place he died at, the place where you were taken to, the place where he was buried? Do you know the place where he was buried?"

Jo answers with a nod: having also nodded as each other place was mentioned.

"Go before me and show me all those dreadful places. Stop opposite to each, and don't speak to me unless I speak to you. Don't look back. Do what I want, and I will pay you well."

Jo attends closely while the words are being spoken; tells them off on his broom-handle, finding them rather hard; pauses to consider their



meaning; considers it satisfactory, and nods his ragged head.

"I'm fly," says Jo. "But fen larks, you know. Stow hooking it!"

"What does the horrible creature mean?" exclaims the servant, recoiling from him.

"Stow cutting away, you know!" says Jo.

"I don't understand you. Go on before! I will give you more money than you ever had in your life."

Jo screws up his mouth into a whistle, gives his ragged head a rub, takes his broom under his arm, and leads the way; passing deftly, with his bare feet, over the hard stones, and through the mud and mire.

Cook's Court. Jo stops. A pause.

"Who lives here?"

"Him wot give him his writing, and give me half a bull," says Jo, in a whisper, without looking over his shoulder.

"Go on to the next!"

Krook's house. Jo stops again. A longer pause.

"Who lives here?"

"*He* lived here," Jo answers as before.

After a silence he is asked, "In which room?"

"In the back room up there. You can see the winder from this corner. Up there! That's where

I see him stritched out. This is the public 'ouse where I was took to."

"Go on to the next! "

It was a longer walk to the next; but Jo, relieved of his first suspicions, sticks to the forms imposed upon him, and does not look round. By many devious ways, reeking with offense of many kinds, they come to the little tunnel of a court, and to the gas-lamp (lighted now), and to the iron gate.

"He was put there," says Jo, holding to the bars and looking in.

"Where? O, what a scene of horror! "

"There! " says Jo, pointing. "Over yinder. Among them piles of bones, and close to that there kitchin winder! They put him wery nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to get it in. I could unkiver it for you with my broom, if the gate was open. That's why they locks it, I s'pose," giving it a shake. "It's always locked. Look at the rat! " cries Jo, excited. "Hi! Look! There he goes! Ho! Into the ground! "

The servant shrinks into a corner — into a corner of that hideous archway, with its deadly stains contaminating her dress; and putting out her two hands, and passionately telling him to keep away from her, for he is loathsome to her, so remains for

some moments. Jo stands staring, and is still staring when she recovers herself.

"Is this place of abomination consecrated ground? "

"I don't know nothink of consequential ground," says Jo, still staring.

"Is it blessed? "

"Which? " says Jo, in the last degree amazed.

"Is it blessed? "

"I'm blest if I know," says Jo, staring more than ever; "but I shouldn't think it warn't. Blest? " repeats Jo, something troubled in his mind. "It ain't done it much good if it is. Blest? I should think it was t'othered myself. But I don't know nothink! "

The servant takes as little heed of what he says, as she seems to take of what she has said herself. She draws off her glove, to get some money from her purse. Jo silently notices how white and small her hand is, and what a jolly servant she must be to wear such sparkling rings.

She drops a piece of money in his hand, without touching it, and shuddering as their hands approach. "Now," she adds, "show me the spot again! "

Jo thrusts the handle of his broom between the bars of the gate, and, with his utmost power of elaboration, points it out. At length, looking aside

to see if he has made himself intelligible, he finds that he is alone.

His first proceeding, is, to hold the piece of money to the gas-light, and to be overpowered at finding that it is yellow — gold. His next, is, to give it a one-sided bite at the edge, as a test of its quality. His next, to put it in his mouth for safety, and to sweep the step and passage with great care. His job done, he sets off for Tom-all-Alone's; stopping in the light of innumerable gas-lamps to produce the piece of gold, and give it another one-sided bite, as a reassurance of its being genuine.

The Mercury in powder is in no want of society to-night, for my Lady goes to a grand dinner, and three or four balls. Sir Leicester is fidgety, down at Chesney Wold, with no better company than the gout; he complains to Mrs. Rouncewell that the rain makes such a monotonous pattering on the terrace, that he can't read the paper, even by the fireside in his own snug dressing-room.

“Sir Leicester would have done better to try the other side of the house, my dear,” says Mrs. Rouncewell to Rosa. “His dressing-room is on my Lady's side. And in all these years I never heard the step upon the Ghost's Walk, more distinct than it is to-night!”

\* \* \* \* \*

It is the long vacation in the regions of Chancery Lane. The good ships Law and Equity, those teak-built, copper-bottomed, iron-fastened, brazen-faced, and not by any means fast-sailing Clippers, are laid up in ordinary. The Courts are all shut up; the public offices lie in a hot sleep; Westminster Hall itself is a shady solitude where nightingales might sing, and a tenderer class of suitors than is usually found there, walk.

Over all the legal neighborhood, there hangs, like some great veil of rust, or gigantic cobweb, the idleness and pensiveness of the long vacation. Mr. Snagsby, law-stationer of Cook's Court, Curzor Street, is sensible of the influence; not only in his mind as a sympathetic and contemplative man, but also in his business as a law-stationer aforesaid.

Being wanted in the shop, Mr. Snagsby descends, and finds his two 'prentices intently contemplating a police constable, who holds a ragged boy by the arm.

"Why, bless my heart," says Mr. Snagsby, "what's the matter?"

"This boy," says the constable, "although he's repeatedly told to, won't move on——"

"I'm always a-moving on, sir," cries the boy, wiping away his grimy tears with his arm. "I've always been a-moving and a-moving on, ever since



I was born. Where can I possibly move to, sir, more nor I do move! ”

“ He won’t move on,” says the constable, calmly, with a slight professional hitch of his neck involving its better settlement in his stiff stock, “ although he has been repeatedly cautioned, and therefore I am obliged to take him into custody. He’s as obstinate a young gonoph as I know. He won’t move on.”

“ O my eye! Where can I move to? ” cries the boy clutching quite desperately at his hair, and beating his bare feet upon the floor of Mr. Snagsby’s passage.

“ Don’t you come none of that, or I shall make blessed short work of you! ” says the constable, giving him a passionless shake. “ My instructions are, that you are to move on. I have told you so five hundred times.”

“ But where? ” cries the boy.

“ Well! Really, constable, you know,” says Mr. Snagsby, wistfully, and coughing behind his hand his cough of great perplexity and doubt; “ really that does seem a question. Where, you know? ”

“ My instructions don’t go to that,” replies the constable.

“ My instructions are that this boy is to move on.”

Mr. Snagsby says nothing at all, but coughs his

forlornest cough, expressive of no thoroughfare in any direction. By this time Mrs. Snagsby, hearing the altercation, has appeared upon the stairs.

"The simple question is, sir," says the constable, "whether you know this boy. He says you do."

Mrs. Snagsby, from her elevation instantly cries out, "No, he don't! "

"My little woman! " says Mr. Snagsby, looking up the staircase. "My love, permit me! Pray have a moment's patience, my dear. I do know something of this lad, and in what I know of him, I can't say that there's any harm; perhaps on the contrary, constable." To whom the law-stationer relates his Joful and woful experience, suppressing the half-crown fact.

"Well! " says the constable, "so far, it seems, he had grounds for what he said. When I took him into custody up in Holborn, he said you knew him. Upon that, a young man who was in the crowd said he was acquainted with you, and you were a respectable housekeeper, and if I'd call and make the inquiry, he'd appear. The young man don't seem inclined to keep his word, but — Oh! Here is the young man! "

Enter Mr. Guppy, who nods to Mr. Snagsby, and touches his hat with the chivalry of clerkship to the ladies on the stairs.

"I was strolling away from the office just now,

when I found this row going on," says Mr. Guppy to the law-stationer; "and as your name was mentioned, I thought it was right the thing should be looked into."

"It was very good-natured of you, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, "and I am obliged to you." And Mr. Snagsby again relates his experience, again suppressing the half-crown fact.

"Now, I know where you live," says the constable, then, to Jo. "You live down in Tom-all-Alone's. That's a nice innocent place to live in, ain't it? "

"I can't go and live in no nicer place, sir," replies Jo. "They wouldn't have nothink to say to me if I wos to go to a nice innocent place fur to live. Who ud go and let a nice innocent lodging to such a regular one as me? "

"You are very poor, ain't you? " says the constable.

"Yes, I am indeed, sir, wery poor in gin'ral," replies Jo.

"I leave you to judge now! I shook these two half-crowns out of him," says the constable, producing them to the company, "in only putting my hand upon him! "

"They're wot's left, Mr. Snagsby," says Jo, "out of a sov'ring as wos give me by a lady in a wale as sed she was a servant and as come to my

crossin one night and asked to be showed this 'ere ouse and the ouse wot him as you giv the writin to died at, and the berrin-ground wot he's berrid in. She ses to me she ses 'are you the boy at Inkwhich?' she ses. I ses 'yes' I ses. She ses to me she ses 'can you show me all them places?' I ses 'yes I can' I ses. And she ses to me 'do it' and I dun it and she give me a sov'ring and hooked it. And I ain't had much of the sov'-ring neither," says Jo, with dirty tears, "fur I had to pay five bob, down in Tom-all-Alone's, afore they'd square it fur to give me change, and then a young man he thieved another five while I was asleep and another boy he thieved ninepence and the landlord he stood drains round with a lot more on it."

"You don't expect anybody to believe this, about the lady and the sovereign, do you?" says the constable, eyeing him aside with ineffable disdain.

"I don't know as I do, sir," replies Jo. "I don't expect nothink at all, sir, much, but that's the true hist'ry on it."

"You see what he is!" the constable observes to the audience. "Well, Mr. Snagsby, if I don't lock him up this time, will you engage for his moving on?"

"No!" cries Mrs. Snagsby from the stairs.



"My little woman!" pleads her husband. "Constable, I have no doubt he'll move on. You know you really must do it," says Mr. Snagsby.

"I'm everyways agreeable, sir," says the hapless Jo.

"Do it, then," observes the constable, "You know what you have got to do. Do it! And recollect you won't get off so easy next time. Catch hold of your money. Now, the sooner you're five mile off, the better for all parties."

With this farewell hint, and pointing generally to the setting sun, as a likely place to move on to, the constable bids his auditors good afternoon; and makes the echoes of Cook's Court perform slow music for him as he walks away on the shady side, carrying his iron-bound hat in his hand for a little ventilation.

Now, Jo's improbable story concerning the lady and the sovereign has awakened more or less the curiosity of all the company. Mr. Guppy, who has an inquiring mind in matters of evidence, and who has been suffering severely from the lassitude of the long vacation, takes that interest in the case, that he enters on a regular cross-examination of the witness, which is found so interesting by the ladies that Mrs. Snagsby politely invites him to step upstairs, and drink a cup of tea, if he will excuse the disarranged state of the tea-table, consequent on



their previous exertions. Mr. Guppy yielding his assent to this proposal, Jo is requested to follow into the drawing-room doorway, where Mr. Guppy takes him in hand as a witness, patting him into this shape, that shape, and the other shape, like a buttermilk dealer dealing with so much butter, and worrying him according to the best models. Nor is the examination unlike many such model displays, both in respect of its eliciting nothing and of its being lengthy; for, Mr. Guppy is sensible of his talent, and Mrs. Snagsby feels, not only that it gratifies her inquisitive disposition, but that it lifts her husband's establishment higher up in the law.

"Well!" says Mr. Guppy, "either this boy sticks to it like cobbler's-wax, or there is something out of the common here that beats anything that ever came into my way at Kenge and Car-boy's."

Jo, whose immediate object seems to be to get away on any terms, gives a shuffling nod. Mr. Guppy then throws him a penny, and Mrs. Snagsby calls to Guster to see him safely out of the house. But, before he goes downstairs, Mr. Snagsby loads him with some broken meats from the table, which he carries away, hugging in his arms.

Jo moves on, through the long vacation, down

to Blackfriars Bridge, where he finds a baking stony corner, wherein to settle to his repast.

And there he sits, munching and gnawing, and looking up at the great Cross on the summit of St. Paul's Cathedral, glittering above a red and violet-tinted cloud of smoke. From the boy's face one might suppose that sacred emblem to be, in his eyes, the crowning confusion of the great, confused city; so golden, so high up, so far out of his reach. There he sits, the sun going down, the river running fast, the crowd flowing by him in two streams — everything moving on to some purpose and to one end — until he is stirred up, and told to "move on" too.

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In Lincoln's Inn Fields the evening is hot; both Mr. Tulkinghorn's windows are wide open, and the room is lofty, gusty, and gloomy. These may not be desirable characteristics when November comes with fog and sleet, or January with ice and snow; but they have their merits in the sultry long vacation weather.

Plenty of dust comes in at Mr. Tulkinghorn's windows, and plenty more has generated among his furniture and papers. It lies thick everywhere.

In his towering magazine of dust, the universal

article into which his papers and himself, and all his clients, and all things of earth, animate and inanimate, are resolving, Mr. Tulkinghorn sits at one of the open windows, enjoying a bottle of old port. Though a hard-grained man, close, dry, and silent, he can enjoy old wine with the best. He has a priceless binn of port in some artful cellar under the Fields, which is one of his many secrets. When he dines alone in chambers, as he has dined to-day, and has his bit of fish and his steak or chicken brought in from the coffee-house, he descends with a candle to the echoing regions below the deserted mansion, and, heralded by a remote reverberation of thundering doors, comes gravely back, encircled by an earthy atmosphere, and carrying a bottle from which he pours a radiant nectar, two score and ten years old, that blushes in the glass to find itself so famous, and fills the whole room with the fragrance of southern grapes.

Mr. Tulkinghorn, sitting in the twilight by the open window, enjoys his wine. As if it whispered to him of its fifty years of silence and seclusion, it shuts him up the closer. More impenetrable than ever, he sits and drinks, and mellows, as it were, in secrecy; pondering, at that twilight hour, on all the mysteries he knows, associated with darkening woods in the country, and vast blank shut-up houses in town; and perhaps sparing a thought

or two for himself, and his family history, and his money, and his will—all a mystery to everyone—and that one bachelor friend of his, a man of the same mould and a lawyer, too, who lived the same kind of life until he was seventy-five years old, and then, suddenly conceiving (as it is supposed) an impression that it was too monotonous, gave his gold watch to his hair dresser one summer evening, and walked leisurely home to the Temple, and hanged himself.

But, Mr. Tulkinghorn is not alone to-night, to ponder at his usual length. Seated at the same table, though with his chair modestly and uncomfortably drawn a little way from it, sits a bald, mild, shining man, who coughs respectfully behind his hand when the lawyer bids him fill his glass.

“Now, Snagsby,” says Mr. Tulkinghorn, “to go over this odd story again.”

“If you please, sir.”

“You told me when you were so good as to step round here, last night ——”

“For which I must ask you to excuse me if it was a liberty, sir; but I remember that you had taken a sort of an interest in that person, and I thought it possible that you might—just—wish—to——”

Mr. Tulkinghorn is not the man to help him to any conclusion, or to admit anything as to any pos-



sibility concerning himself. So Mr. Snagsby trails off into saying, with an awkward cough, "I must ask you to excuse the liberty, sir, I am sure."

"Not at all," says Mr. Tulkinghorn. "You told me, Snagsby, that you put on your hat and came round without mentioning your intention to your wife. That was prudent, I think, because it's not a matter of such importance that it requires to be mentioned."

"Well, sir," returns Mr. Snagsby, "you see my little woman is — not to put too fine a point upon it — inquisitive. She's inquisitive. Poor little thing, she's liable to spasms, and it's good for her to have her mind employed. In consequence of which she employs it — I should say upon every individual thing she can lay hold of, whether it concerns her or not — especially not. My little woman has a very active mind, sir."

Mr. Snagsby drinks, and murmurs with an admiring cough behind his hand, "Dear me, very fine wine, indeed."

"Therefore you kept your visit to yourself, last night?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn. "And to-night, too?"

"Yes, sir, and to-night, too."

Mr. Tulkinghorn assents. "Fill your glass, Snagsby."

"Thank you, sir, I am sure," returns the sta-



tioner, with his cough of deference. "This is wonderfully fine wine, sir!"

"Will you run over, once again, what the boy said?" asks Mr. Tulkinghorn, putting his hands into the pockets of his rusty smallclothes and leaning quietly back in his chair.

"With pleasure, sir."

Then, with fidelity, though with some prolixity, the law-stationer repeats Jo's statement made to those assembled at his house. On coming to the end of his narrative, he gives a great start, and breaks off with—"Dear me, sir, I wasn't aware there was any other gentleman present!"

Mr. Snagsby is dismayed to see, standing with an attentive face between himself and the lawyer, at a little distance from the table, a person with a hat and stick in his hand, who was not there when he himself came in, and has not since entered by the door or by either of the windows. There is a press in the room, but its hinges have not creaked, nor has a step been audible upon the floor. Yet this third person stands there, with his attentive face, and his hat and stick in his hands, and his hands behind him, a composed and quiet listener. He is a stoutly built, steady-looking, sharp-eyed man in black, of about the middle-age. Except that he looks at Mr. Snagsby as if he were going to take his portrait, there is nothing remarkable

about him at first sight but his ghostly manner of appearing.

"Don't mind this gentleman," says Mr. Tullinghorn, in his quiet way. "This is only Mr. Bucket."

"O indeed, sir?" returns the stationer, expressing by a cough that he is quite in the dark as to who Mr. Bucket may be.

"I wanted him to hear this story," says the lawyer, "because I have half a mind (for a reason) to know more of it, and he is very intelligent in such things. What do you say to this, Bucket?"

"It's very plain, sir. Since our people have moved this boy on, and he's not to be found on his old lay, if Mr. Snagsby don't object to go down with me to Tom-all-Alone's and point him out, we can have him here in less than a couple of hours' time. I can do it without Mr. Snagsby, of course; but this is the shortest way."

"Mr. Bucket is a detective officer, Snagsby," says the lawyer in explanation.

"Is he, indeed, sir?" says Mr. Snagsby, with a strong tendency in his clump of hair to stand on end.

"And if you have no real objection to accompany Mr. Bucket to the place in question," pursues the lawyer, "I shall feel obliged to you if you will do so."

In a moment's hesitation on the part of Mr. Snagsby, Bucket dips down to the bottom of his mind.

"Don't you be afraid of hurting the boy," he says. "You won't do that. It's all right as far as the boy's concerned. We shall only bring him here to ask him a question or so I want to put to him, and he'll be paid for his trouble, and sent away again. It'll be a good job for him. I promise you, as a man, that you shall see the boy sent away all right. Don't you be afraid of hurting him; you ain't going to do that."

"Very well, Mr. Tulkinghorn!" cries Mr. Snagsby cheerfully, and reassured, "since that's the case ——"

"Yes! and lookee here, Mr. Snagsby," resumes Bucket, taking him aside by the arm, tapping him familiarly on the breast, and speaking in a confidential tone. "You're a man of the world, you know, and a man of business, and a man of sense. That's what *you* are."

"I am sure I am much obliged to you for your good opinion," returns the stationer, with his cough of modesty, "but ——"

"That's what *you* are, you know," says Bucket. "Now, it ain't necessary to say to a man like you, engaged in your business, which is a business of trust and requires a person to be wide awake and

have his senses about him, and his head screwed on tight (I had an uncle in your business once) — it ain't necessary to say to a man like you, that it's the best and wisest way to keep little matters like this quiet. Don't you see? Quiet! "

"Certainly, certainly," returns the other.

"I don't mind telling *you*," says Bucket, with an engaging appearance of frankness, "that as far as I can understand it, there seems to be a doubt whether this dead person wasn't entitled to a little property, and whether this female hasn't been up to some games respecting that property, don't you see? "

"O! " says Mr. Snagsby, but not appearing to see quite distinctly.

"Now, what *you* want," pursues Bucket, again, tapping Mr. Snagsby on the breast in a comfortable and soothing manner, "is, that person should have their rights according to justice. That's what *you* want."

"To be sure," returns Mr. Snagsby, with a nod.

"On account of which, and at the same time to oblige a — do you call it, in your business, customer or client? I forget how my uncle used to call it."

"Why, I generally say customer myself," replies Mr. Snagsby.

"You're right! " returns Mr. Bucket, shaking



hands with him quite affectionately, — “on account of which, and at the same time to oblige a real good customer, you mean to go down with me, in confidence, to Tom-all-Alone’s, and to keep the whole thing quiet ever afterwards and never mention it to anyone. That’s about your intentions, if I understand you?”

“You are right, sir. You are right,” says Mr. Snagsby.

“Then here’s your hat,” returns his new friend, quite as intimate with it as if he had made it; “and if you’re ready, I am.”

They leave Mr. Tulkinghorn, without a ruffle on the surface of his unfathomable depths, drinking his old wine, and go down into the streets.

“You don’t happen to know a very good sort o person of the name of Gridley, do you?” says Bucket, in a friendly converse as they descended the stairs.

“No,” says Mr. Snagsby, considering, “I don’t know anybody of that name. Why?”

“Nothing particular,” says Bucket; “only, having allowed his temper to get a trifle the better of him, and having been threatening some respectable people, he is keeping out of the way of a warrant I have got against him — which it’s a pity that a man of sense should do.”

As they walk along, Mr. Snagsby observes, as a



novelty, that, however quick their pace may be, his companion still seems in some undefinable manner to lurk and lounge; also, that whenever he is going to turn to the right or left, he pretends to have a fixed purpose in his mind of going straight ahead, and wheels off, sharply, at the very last moment. Now and then, when they pass a police-constable on his beat, Mr. Snagsby notices that both the constable and his guide fall into a deep abstraction as they come towards each other, and appear entirely to overlook each other, and to gaze into space. In a few instances, Mr. Bucket coming behind some under-sized young man with a shining hat on, and his sleek hair twisted into one flat curl on each side of his head, almost without glancing at him touches him with his stick; upon which the young man, looking round, instantly evaporates. For the most part Mr. Bucket notices things in general, with a face as unchanging as the great mourning ring on his little finger, or the brooch, composed of not much diamond and a good deal of setting, which he wears in his shirt.

When they come at last to Tom-all-Alone's, Mr. Bucket stops for a moment at the corner, and takes a lighted bull's-eye from the constable on duty there, who then accompanies him with his own particular bull's-eye at his waist. Between his two conductors, Mr. Snagsby passes along the

middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water — though the roads are dry elsewhere — and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses. Branching from this street and its heaps of ruins, are other streets and courts so infamous that Mr. Snagsby sickens in body and mind, and feels as if he were going, every moment deeper down, into the infernal gulf.

“Draw off a bit here, Mr. Snagsby,” says Bucket, as a kind of shabby palanquin is borne towards them, surrounded by a noisy crowd. “Here’s the fever coming up the street!”

As the unseen wretch goes by, the crowd, leaving that object of attraction, hovers round the three visitors, like a dream of horrible faces, and fades away up alleys and into ruins, and behind walls; and with occasional cries and shrill whistles of warning, thenceforth flits about them till they leave the place.

“Are those the fever-houses, Darby?” Mr. Bucket coolly asks, as he turns his bull’s-eye on a line of stinking ruins.

Darby replies that “all them are,” and further that in all, for months and months, the people “have been down by dozens,” and have been carried out, dead and dying “like sheep with the

rot." Bucket observing to Mr. Snagsby as they go on again, that he looks a little poorly, Mr. Snagsby answers that he feels as if he couldn't breathe the dreadful air.

There is inquiry made, at various houses, for a boy named Jo. As few people are known in Tom-all-Alone's by any Christian sign, there is much reference to Mr. Snagsby whether he means Carrots, or the Colonel, or Gallows, or Young Chisel, or Terrier Tip, or Lanky, or the Brick. Mr. Snagsby describes over and over again. There are conflicting opinions respecting the original of his picture. Some think it must be Carrots; some say the Brick. The Colonel is produced, but is not at all near the thing. Whenever Mr. Snagsby and his conductors are stationary, the crowd flows round, and from its squalid depths obsequious advice heaves up to Mr. Bucket. Whenever they move, and the angry bull's-eyes glare, it fades away, and flits about them up the alleys, and in the ruins, and behind the walls, as before.

At last there is a lair found out where Toughy, or the Tough Subject, lays him down at night; and it is thought that the Tough Subject may be Jo. Comparison of notes between Mr. Snagsby and the proprietress of the house — a drunken face tied up in a black bundle, and flaring out of a heap of rags on the floor of a dog hutch which is

her private apartment — leads to the establishment of this conclusion. Toughy has gone to the Doctor's to get a bottle of stuff for a sick woman, but will be here anon.

“That's Jo,” says Mr. Snagsby.

Jo stands amazed in the disk of light, like a ragged figure in a magic-lantern, trembling to think that he has offended against the law in not having moved on far enough. Mr. Snagsby, however, giving him the consolatory assurance, “It's only a job you will be paid for, Jo,” he recovers; and, on being taken outside by Mr. Bucket for a little private confabulation, tells his tale satisfactorily, though out of breath.

“I have squared it with the lad,” says Mr. Bucket, returning, “and it's all right. Now, Mr. Snagsby, we're ready for you.”

First, Jo has to complete his errand of good-nature by handing over the physic he has been to get, which he delivers with the laconic verbal direction that “it's to be all took d'rectly.” Second, Mr. Snagsby has to lay upon the table half-a-crown, his usual panacea for an immense variety of afflictions. Thirdly, Mr. Bucket has to take Jo by the arm a little above the elbow and walk him on before him; without which observance, neither the Tough Subject nor any other Subject could be professionally conducted to Lincoln's Inn



Fields. These arrangements completed, they give the woman good night, and come out once more into black and foul Tom-all-Alone's.

By the noisome ways through which they descended into that pit, they gradually emerge from it; the crowd flitting, and whistling, and skulking about them, until they come to the verge, where restoration of the bull's eye is made to Darby. Here, the crowd like a concourse of imprisoned demons, turns back, yelling, and is seen no more. Through the clearer and fresher streets, never so clear and fresh to Mr. Snagsby's mind as now, they walk and ride, until they come to Mr. Tulkinghorn's gate.

As they ascend the dim stairs (Mr. Tulkinghorn's chambers being on the first floor), Mr. Bucket mentions that he has the key of the outer door in his pocket, and that there is no need to ring. For a man so expert in most things of that kind, Bucket takes time to open the door, and makes some noise too. It may be that he sounds a note of preparation.

Howbeit, they come at last into the hall, where a lamp is burning, and so into Mr. Tulkinghorn's usual room — the room where he drank his old wine to-night. He is not there, but his two old-fashioned candlesticks are; and the room is tolerably light.



Mr. Bucket, still having his professional hold of Jo, and appearing to Mr. Snagsby to possess an unlimited number of eyes, makes a little way into this room, when Jo starts and stops.

"What's the matter?" said Bucket in a whisper.

"There she is!" cried Jo.

"Who?"

"The lady!"

A female figure, closely veiled, stands in the middle of the room, where the light falls upon it. It is quite still, and silent. The front of the figure is towards them, but it takes no notice of their entrance, and remains like a statue.

"Now, tell me," says Bucket aloud, "how you know that to be the lady."

"I know the wale," replies Jo, staring, "and the bonnet, and the gownd."

"Be quite sure what you say, Tough," returns Bucket, narrowly observant of him. "Look again."

"I am a-looking as hard as ever I can look," says Jo, with starting eyes, "and that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd."

"What about those rings you told me of?" asks Bucket.

"A-sparkling all over here," says Jo, rubbing the fingers of his left hand on the knuckles of his right, without taking his eyes from the figure.

The figure removes the right-hand glove, and shows the hand.

"Now, what do you say to that?" asks Bucket.

Jo shakes his head. "Not rings a bit like them. Not a hand like that."

"What are you talking of?" says Bucket; evidently pleased though, and well pleased too.

"Hand was a deal whiter, a deal delicater, and a deal smaller," returns Jo.

"Why, you'll tell me I'm my own mother next," says Mr. Bucket. "Do you recollect the lady's voice?"

"I think I does," says Jo.

The figure speaks. "Was it all like this? I will speak as long as you like if you are not sure. Was it this voice, or at all like this voice?"

Jo looks aghast at Mr. Bucket. "Not a bit!"

"Then, what," retorts that worthy, pointing to the figure, "did you say it was the lady for?"

"Cos," says Jo, with a perplexed stare, but without being at all shaken in his certainty, "cos that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd. It is her and it an't her. It a'nt her hand, nor yet her rings, nor yet her woice. But that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd, and they're wore the same way wot she wore 'em, and it's her

height wot she wos, and she giv me a sov'-ring and hooked it."

"Well!" says Mr. Bucket, slightly, "we haven't got much good out of *you*. But, however, here's five shillings for you. Take care how you spend it, and don't get yourself into trouble." Bucket stealthily tells the coins from one hand into the other like counters—which is a way he has, his principal use of them being in these games of skill—and then puts them, in a little pile, into the boy's hand, and takes him out to the door; leaving Mr. Snagsby, not by any means comfortable under these mysterious circumstances, alone with the veiled figure. But on Mr. Tulkinghorn's coming into the room, the veil is raised, and a sufficiently good-looking Frenchwoman is revealed, though her expression is something of the intensest.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle Hortense," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, with his usual equanimity. "I will give you no further trouble about this little wager."

"You will do me the kindness to remember, sir, that I am not at present placed?" says Mademoiselle."

"Certainly, certainly!"

"And to confer upon me the favor of your distinguished recommendation?"

"By all means, Mademoiselle Hortense."

“A word from Mr. Tulkinghorn is so powerful.” —“It shall not be wanting, Mademoiselle.” —“Receive the assurance of my devoted gratitude, dear sir.” —“Good-night.” Mademoiselle goes out with an air of native gentility; and Mr. Bucket, to whom it is, on an emergency, as natural to be groom of the ceremonies as it is to be anything else, shows her downstairs, not without gallantry.

“Well, Bucket?” quoth Mr. Tulkinghorn, on his return.

“It’s all squared, you see, as I squared it myself, sir. There an’t a doubt that it was the other one with this one’s dress on. The boy was exact respecting colors and everything. Mr. Snagsby, I promised you as a man that he should be sent away all right. Don’t say it wasn’t done!”

“You have kept your word, sir,” returns the stationer; “and if I can be of no further use, Mr. Tulkinghorn, I think, as my little woman will be getting anxious ——”

“Thank you, Snagsby, no further use,” says Mr. Tulkinghorn. “I am quite indebted to you for the trouble you have taken already.”

“Not at all, sir. I wish you good-night.”

“You see, Mr. Snagsby,” says Mr. Bucket, accompanying him to the door, and shaking hands with him over and over again, “what I like in you is, that you’re a man it’s of no use pump-



ing; that's what *you* are. When you know you have done a right thing, you put it away, and it's done with and gone, and there's an end of it. That's what *you* do."

"That is certainly what I endeavor to do, sir," returns Mr. Snagsby.

"No, you don't do yourself justice. It an't what you endeavor to do," says Mr. Bucket, shaking hands with him and blessing him in the tenderest manner, "it's what you *do*. That's what I estimate in a man in your way of business."

Mr. Snagsby makes a suitable response; and goes homeward so confused by the events of the evening, that he is doubtful of his being awake and out — doubtful of the reality of the streets through which he goes — doubtful of the reality of the moon that shines above him. He is presently reassured on these subjects, by the unchallengeable reality of Mrs. Snagsby, sitting up with her head in a perfect bee-hive of curl-papers and nightcap; who has dispatched Guster to the police-station with official intelligence of her husband's being made away with, and who, within the last two hours, has passed through every stage of swooning with the greatest decorum. But, as the little woman feelingly says, many thanks she gets for it!

\* \* \* \* \*



The London season comes to a sudden end and Mrs. Rouncewell, housekeeper at Chesney Wold, foresees, though no instructions have yet come down, that the family may shortly be expected. Hence the stately old dame, taking Time by the forelock, leads him up and down the staircases, and along the galleries and passages, and through the rooms, to witness before he grows any older that everything is ready; that floors are rubbed bright, carpets spread, curtains shaken out, beds puffed and patted, still-room and kitchen cleared for action, — all things prepared as beseems the Dedlock dignity.

Of all the shadows in Chesney Wold, the shadow in the long drawing-room upon my lady's picture is the first to come, the last to be disturbed. At this hour and by this light it changes into a threatening hand raised up, and menacing the handsome face with every breath that stirs.

"She is not well, ma'am," says a groom in Mrs. Rouncewell's audience-chamber.

"My Lady not well! What's the matter?"

"Why, my Lady has been but poorly, ma'am, since she was last here — I don't mean with the family, ma'am, but when she was here as a bird of passage-like. My Lady has not been out much for her, and has kept her room a good deal."

"Chesney Wold, Thomas," rejoins the house-keeper, with proud complacency, "will set my Lady up! There is no finer air, and no healthier soil, in the world! "

Thomas may have his own personal opinions on this subject; probably hints them, in his manner of smoothing his sleek head from the nape of his neck to his temples; but he forbears to express them further, and retires to the servants' hall to regale on cold meat-pie and ale.

This groom is the pilot-fish before the nobler shark. Next evening, down come Sir Leicester and my Lady with their largest retinue, and down come the cousins and others from all the points of the compass.

My Lady takes no great pains to entertain the numerous guests, and, being still unwell, rarely appears until late in the day. But, at all the dismal dinners, leaden lunches, basilisk balls, and other melancholy pageants, her mere appearance is a relief. As to Sir Leicester, he conceives it utterly impossible that anything can be wanting, in any direction, by anyone who has the good fortune to be received under that roof; and in a state of sublime satisfaction, he moves among the company, a magnificent refrigerator.

Mercury in attendance with coffee informs Sir Leicester, hereupon, that Mr. Tulkinghorn has ar-

rived, and has taken dinner. My Lady turns her head inward for the moment, then looks out again as before.

Cousin Volumnia is charmed to hear that her Delight is come. He is so original, such a stolid creature, such an immense being for knowing all sorts of things and never telling them! Volumnia is persuaded that he must be a Freemason. Is sure he is at the head of a lodge, wears short aprons, and is made a perfect Idol of, with candlesticks and trowels. These lively remarks the fair Dedlock delivers in her youthful manner, while making a purse.

"He has not been here once," she adds, "since I came. I really had some thoughts of breaking my heart for the inconstant creature. I had almost made up mind that he was dead."

It may be the gathering gloom of evening, or it may be the darker gloom within herself, but a shade is on my Lady's face, as if she thought, "I would he were! "

"Mr. Tulkinghorn," says Sir Leicester, "is always welcome here, and always discreet wheresoever he is. A very valuable person, and deservedly respected."

The debilitated cousin supposes he is " 'nor-mously rich fler."

"He has a stake in the country," says Sir Leices-

ter, "I have no doubt. He is, of course, handsomely paid, and he associates almost on a footing of equality with the highest society."

Everybody starts. For a gun is fired close by.

"Good gracious, what's that?" cries Volumnia with her little withered scream.

"A rat," says my Lady. "And they have shot him." Enter Mr. Tulkinghorn, followed by Mercuries, with lamps and candles.

"No, no," says Sir Leicester, "I think not. My lady, do you object to the twilight?"

On the contrary, my Lady prefers it.

"Volumnia?"

O! nothing is so delicious to Volumnia, as to sit and talk in the dark.

"Then take them away," says Sir Leicester. "Tulkinghorn, I beg your pardon. How do you do?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn with his usual leisurely ease advances, renders his passing homage to my Lady, takes Sir Leicester's hand, and subsides into the chair proper to him when he has anything to communicate, on the opposite side of the Baronet's little newspaper-table. Sir Leicester is apprehensive that my Lady, not being very well, will take cold at that open window. My Lady is obliged to him, but would rather sit there, for the air. Sir Leicester rises, adjusts her scarf about her, and returns to



his seat. Mr. Tulkinghorn in the meanwhile takes a pinch of snuff.

"Now," says Sir Leicester. "How has that election contest gone?"

"Oh, hollow from the beginning. Not a chance. They have brought in both their people. You are beaten out of all reason. Three to one."

It is a part of Mr. Tulkinghorn's policy and mastery to have *no* political opinions; indeed, *no* opinions. Therefore he says "you" are beaten, and not "we."

Sir Leicester is majestically wroth. Volumnia never heard of such a thing. The debilitated cousin holds that it's — sort of thing that's pure tapu slongs votes — giv'n — Mob.

"It's the place, you know," Mr. Tulkinghorn goes on to say in the last increasing darkness, when there is silence again, "where they wanted to put up Mrs. Rouncewell's son."

"A proposal which, as you correctly informed me at the time, he had the becoming taste and perception," observes Sir Leicester, "to decline. I cannot say that I by any means approve of the sentiments expressed by Mr. Rouncewell, some little while ago, when he requested Lady Dedlock to part with her young companion, simply because his son was attached to the girl. Yet there was a sense of propriety in his decision."



“Ha!” says Mr. Tulkinghorn. “It did not prevent him from being very active in this election, though.”

Sir Leicester is distinctly heard to gasp before speaking. “Did I understand you? Did you say that Mr. Rouncewell had been very active in this election?”

“Uncommonly active.”

“Against ——”

“O dear yes, against you. He is a very good speaker. Plain and emphatic. He made a damaging effect, and has great influence. In the business-part of the proceedings he carried all before him.”

It is evident to the whole company, though nobody can see him, that Sir Leicester is staring majestically.

“And he was much assisted,” says Mr. Tulkinghorn, as a wind-up, “by his son.”

“By his son, sir?” repeats Sir Leicester, with awful politeness.

“By his son.”

“The son who wished to marry the young woman in my Lady’s service?”

“That son. He has but one.”

“Then upon my honor,” says Sir Leicester, after a terrific pause, during which he has been heard to snort and felt to stare; “then upon my honor,

upon my life, upon my reputation and principles, the floodgates of society are burst open, and the waters have — a — obliterated the landmarks of the framework of the cohesion by which things are held together! ”

General burst of cousinly indignation. Volumnia thinks it is really high time, you know, for somebody in power to step in and do something strong. The debilitated cousin thinks — Country’s going — DAYVLE — steeple-chase pace.

“ I beg,” says Sir Leicester, in a breathless condition, “ that we may not comment further on this circumstance. Comment is superfluous. My Lady, let me suggest in reference to that young woman —— ”

“ I have no intention,” observes my Lady from her window, in a low but decided tone, “ of parting with her.”

“ That was not my meaning,” returns Sir Leicester. “ I am glad to hear you say so. I would suggest that as you think her worthy of your patronage, you should exert your influence to keep her from these dangerous hands. You might show her what violence would be done, in such association, to her duties and principles; and you might preserve her for a better fate. You might point out to her that she probably would, in good time, find a husband at Chesney Wold by

whom she would not be — ” Sir Leicester adds, after a moment’s consideration, “ dragged from the altars of her forefathers.”

These remarks he offers with his unvarying politeness and deference when he addresses himself to his wife. She merely moves her head in reply. The moon is rising; and where she sits there is a little stream of cold pale light, in which her head is seen.

“ It is worthy of remark,” says Mr. Tulkinghorn, “ however, that these people are, in their way, very proud.”

“ Proud? ” Sir Leicester doubts his hearing.

“ I should not be surprised, if they all voluntarily abandoned the girl — yes, lover and all — instead of her abandoning them, supposing she remained at Chesney Wold under such circumstances.”

“ Well! ” says Sir Leicester, tremulously, “ Well! You should know, Mr. Tulkinghorn. You have been among them.”

“ Really, Sir Leicester,” returns the lawyer, “ I state the fact. Why, I could tell you a story — with Lady Dedlock’s permission.”

Her head concedes it, and Volumnia is enchanted. A story! O he is going to tell something at last! A ghost in it, Volumnia hopes?

“ No. Real flesh and blood.” Mr. Tulking-

horn stops for an instant, and repeats, with some little emphasis grafted upon his usual monotony, "Real flesh and blood, Miss Dedlock. Sir Leicester, these particulars have only lately become known to me. They are very brief. They exemplify what I have said. I suppress names for the present. Lady Dedlock will not think me ill-bred, I hope? "

By the light of the fire, which is low, he can be seen looking towards the moonlight. By the light of the moon Lady Dedlock can be seen, perfectly still.

"A townsman of this Mrs. Rouncewell, a man in exactly parallel circumstances as I am told, had the good fortune to have a daughter who attracted the notice of a great lady. I speak of really a great lady; not merely great to him, but married to a gentleman of your condition, Sir Leicester."

Sir Leicester condescendingly says, "Yes, Mr. Tulkinghorn;" implying that then she must have appeared of very considerable moral dimensions indeed, in the eyes of an ironmaster.

"The lady was wealthy and beautiful, and had a liking for the girl, and treated her with great kindness, and kept her always near her. Now this lady preserved a secret under all her greatness, which she had preserved for many years. In fact, she had in early life been engaged to marry a



young rake — he was a captain in the army — nothing connected with whom came to any good. She never did marry him, but she gave birth to a child of which he was the father.”

By the light of the fire he can be seen looking towards the moonlight. By the moonlight, Lady Dedlock can be seen in profile, perfectly still.

“The captain in the army being dead, she believed herself safe; but a train of circumstances with which I need not trouble you, led to discovery. As I received the story, they began in an imprudence on her own part one day, when she was taken by surprise; which shows how difficult it is for the firmest of us (she was very firm) to be always guarded. There was great domestic trouble and amazement, you may suppose; I leave you to imagine, Sir Leicester, the husband’s grief. But that is not the present point. When Mr. Rouncewell’s townsman heard of the disclosure, he no more allowed the girl to be patronized and honored, than he would have suffered her to be trodden under foot before his eyes. Such was his pride, that he indignantly took her away, as if from reproach and disgrace. He had no sense of the honor done him and his daughter by the lady’s condescension; not the least. He resented the girl’s position, as if the lady had been the commonest of commoners. That is the story. I hope Lady Dedlock will excuse its painful nature.”



There are various opinions on the merits, more or less conflicting with Volumnia's. That fair young creature cannot believe there ever was any such lady, and rejects the whole history on the threshold. The majority incline to the debilitated cousin's sentiment, which is in few words — "no business — Rouncewell's 'fernal townsman." Sir Leicester generally refers back in his mind to Wat Tyler, and arranges a sequence of events on a plan of his own.

There is not much conversation in all, for late hours have been kept at Chesney Wold of late, and this is the first night in many on which the family have been alone. It is past ten, when Sir Leicester begs Mr. Tulkinghorn to ring for candles. Then the stream of moonlight has swelled into a lake, and then Lady Dedlock for the first time moves, and rises, and comes forward to a table for a glass of water. Winking cousins, bat-like in the candle glare, crowd round to give it; Volumnia (always ready for something better if procurable) takes another, a very mild sip of which contents her; Lady Dedlock, graceful, self-possessed, looked after by admiring eyes, passes away slowly down the long perspective by the side of that Nymph, not at all improving her as a question of contrast.

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Mr. Tulkithorn arrives in his turret-room, a little breathed by the journey up, though leisurely performed. There is an expression on his face as if he had discharged his mind of some grave matter, and were, in his close way, satisfied. To say of a man so severely and strictly self-repressed that he is triumphant, would be to do him as great an injustice as to suppose him troubled with love or sentiment, or any romantic weakness. He is sedately satisfied. Perhaps there is a rather increased sense of power upon him, as he loosely grasps one of his veinous wrists with his other hand, and holding it behind his back walks noiselessly up and down.

There is a capacious writing-table in the room, on which is a pretty large accumulation of papers. The green lamp is lighted, his reading-glasses lie upon the desk, the easy-chair is wheeled up to it, and it would seem as though he had intended to bestow an hour or so upon these claims on his attention before going to bed. But he happens not to be in a business mind. After a glance at the documents awaiting his notice — with his head bent low over the table, the old man's sight for print or writing being defective at night — he opens the French window and steps out upon the leads. There he again walks slowly up and down, in the same attitude; subsiding, if a man so cool may

have any need to subside, from the story he has related downstairs.

The time was once, when men as knowing as Mr. Tulkinghorn would walk on turret-tops in the star-light, and look up into the sky to read their fortunes there. Hosts of stars are visible to-night, though their brilliancy is eclipsed by the splendor of the moon.

As he paces the leads, with his eyes most probably as high above his thoughts as they are high above the earth, he is suddenly stopped in passing the windows by two eyes that meet his own. The ceiling of his room is rather low; the upper part of the door, which is opposite the window, is of glass. There is an inner baize door, too, but the night being warm he did not close it when he came upstairs. These eyes that meet his own, are looking in through the glass from the corridor outside. He knows them well. The blood has not flushed into his face so suddenly and readily for many a long year, as when he recognizes Lady Dedlock.

He steps into the room, and she comes in too, closing both the doors behind her. There is a wild disturbance — is it fear or anger? — in her eyes. In her carriage and all else, she looks as she looked downstairs two hours ago.

Is it fear, or is it anger, now? He cannot be sure. Both might be as pale, both as intent.

"Lady Dedlock?"

She does not speak at first, nor even when she has slowly dropped into the easy-chair by the table. They look at each other, like two pictures.

"Why have you told my story to so many persons?"

"Lady Dedlock, it was necessary for me to inform you that I knew it."

"How long have you known it?"

"I have suspected it a long while — fully known it a little while."

"Months?"

"Days."

He stands before her, with one hand on a chair-back and the other in his old-fashioned waist-coat and shirt-frill, exactly as he has stood before her at any time since her marriage. The same formal politeness, the same composed deference that might as well be defiance; the whole man the same dark, cold object, at the same distance, which nothing has ever diminished.

"Is this true concerning the poor girl?"

He slightly inclines and advances his head, as not quite understanding the question.

"You know what you related. Is it true? Do



her friends know my story also? Is it the town-talk yet? Is it chalked upon the walls and cried in the streets? ”

So! Anger, and fear, and shame. All three contending. What power this woman has to keep these raging passions down! Mr. Tulkinghorn's thoughts take such form as he looks at her, with his ragged gray eyebrows a hair's-breadth more contracted than usual, under her gaze.

“No, Lady Dedlock. That was a hypothetical case, arising out of Sir Leicester's unconsciously carrying the matter with so high a hand. But it would be a real case if they knew—what we know.”

“Then they do not know it yet?”

“No.”

“Can I save the poor girl from injury before they know it?”

“Really, Lady Dedlock,” Mr. Tulkinghorn replies, “I cannot give a satisfactory opinion on that point.”

And he thinks, with the interest of attentive curiosity, as he watches the struggle in her breast, “The power and force of this woman are astonishing!”

“Sir,” she says, for the moment obliged to set her lips with all the energy she has, that she may speak distinctly, “I will make it plainer. I do not



dispute your hypothetical case. I anticipated it, and felt its truth as strongly as you can do, when I saw Mr. Rouncewell here. I knew very well that if he could have had the power of seeing me as I was, he would consider the poor girl tarnished by having for a moment been, although most innocently, the subject of my great and distinguished patronage. But, I have an interest in her; or I should rather say — no longer belonging to this place — I had; and if you can find so much consideration for the woman under your foot as to remember that, she will be very sensible of your mercy.”

Mr. Tulkinghorn, profoundly attentive, throws this off with a shrug of self-depreciation, and contracts his eyebrows a little more.

“You have prepared me for my exposure, and I thank you for that too. Is there anything that you require of me? Is there any claim that I can release, or any charge or trouble that I can spare my husband in obtaining *his* release, by certifying to the exactness of your discovery? I will write anything, here and now, that you will dictate. I am ready to do it.”

And she would do it! thinks the lawyer, watchful of the firm hand with which she takes the pen!

“I will not trouble you, Lady Dedlock. Pray spare yourself.”

"I have long expected this, as you know. I neither wish to spare myself, nor to be spared. You can do nothing worse to me than you have done. Do what remains, now."

"Lady Dedlock, there is nothing to be done. I will take leave to say a few words, when you have finished."

Their need for watching one another should be over now, but they do it all this time, and the stars watch them both through the opened window. Away in the moonlight lie the woodland fields at rest, and the wide house is as quiet as the narrow one. The narrow one! Where are the digger and the spade, this peaceful night, destined to add the last great secret to the many secrets of the Tulkinghorn existence? Is the man born yet, is the spade wrought yet? Curious questions to consider, more curious perhaps not to consider, under the watching stars upon a summer night.

"Of repentance or remorse, or any feeling of mine," Lady Dedlock presently proceeds, "I say not a word. If I were not dumb, you would be deaf. Let that go by. It is not for your ears."

He makes a feint of offering a protest, but she sweeps it away with her disdainful hand.

"Of other and very different things I come to speak to you. My jewels are all in their proper places of keeping. They will be found there. So,

my dresses. So, all the valuables I have. Some ready money I had with me, please to say, but no large amount. I did not wear my own dress, in order that I might avoid observation. I went, to be henceforward lost. Make this known. I leave no other charge with you."

"Excuse me, Lady Dedlock," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, quite unmoved. "I am not sure that I understand you. You went —— ?"

"To be lost to all here. I leave Chesney Wold to-night. I go this hour."

Mr. Tulkinghorn shakes his head. She rises; but he, without moving hand from chair-back or from old-fashioned waistcoat and shirt-frill, shakes his head.

"What? Not go as I have said? "

"No, Lady Dedlock," he very calmly replies.

"Do you know the relief that my disappearance will be? Have you forgotten the stain and blot upon this place, and where it is, and who it is? "

"No, Lady Dedlock, not by any means."

Without deigning to rejoin, she moves to the inner door and has it in her hand, when he says to her, without himself stirring hand or foot, or raising his voice:

"Lady Dedlock, have the goodness to stop and hear me, or before you reach the staircase I shall ring the alarm-bell and rouse the house. And

then I must speak out, before every guest and servant, every man and woman, in it."

He has conquered her. She falters, trembles, and puts her hand confusedly to her head. Slight tokens these in anyone else; but when so practiced an eye as Mr. Tulkinghorn's sees indecision for a moment in such a subject, he thoroughly knows its value.

He promptly says again, "Have the goodness to hear me, Lady Dedlock," and motions to the chair from which she has risen. She hesitates, but he motions again, and she sits down.

"The relations between us are of an unfortunate description, Lady Dedlock; but, as they are not of my making, I will not apologize for them. The position I hold in reference to Sir Leicester is so well known to you, that I can hardly imagine but that I must long have appeared in your eyes the natural person to make this discovery."

"Sir," she returns without looking up from the ground, on which her eyes are now fixed, "I had better have gone. It would have been far better not to have detained me. I have no more to say."

"Excuse me, Lady Dedlock, if I add, a little more to hear."

"I wish to hear it at the window, then; I can't breathe where I am."



His jealous glance as she walks that way, betrays an instant's misgiving that she may have it in her thoughts to leap over, and dashing against ledge and cornice, strike her life out upon the terrace below. But, a moment's observation of her figure as she stands in the window without any support, looking out at the stars—not up—gloomily out at those stars which are low in the heavens—reassures him. By facing round as she has moved, he stands a little behind her.

“Lady Dedlock, I have not yet been able to come to a decision satisfactory to myself, on the course before me. I am not clear what to do, or how to act next. I must request you, in the meantime, to keep your secret as you have kept it so long, and not to wonder that I keep it too.”

He pauses, but she makes no reply.

“Pardon me, Lady Dedlock. This is an important subject. You are honoring me with your attention?”

“I am.”

“Thank you. I might have known it, from what I have seen of your strength of character. I ought not to have asked the question, but I have the habit of making sure of my ground, step by step, as I go on. The sole consideration in this unhappy case is Sir Leicester.”

“Then why,” she asks in a low voice, and with-



out removing her gloomy look from those distant stars, "do you detain me in his house? "

"Because he *is* the consideration. Lady Dedlock, I have no occasion to tell you that Sir Leicester is a very proud man; that his reliance upon you is implicit; that the fall of that moon out of the sky, would not amaze him more than your fall from your high position as his wife."

She breathes quickly and heavily, but she stands as unflinchingly as ever he has seen her in the midst of her grandest company.

"I declare to you, Lady Dedlock, that with anything short of this case that I have, I would as soon have hoped to root up, by means of my own strength and my own hands, the oldest tree on this estate, as to shake your hold upon Sir Leicester, and Sir Leicester's trust and confidence in you. And even now, with this case I hesitate. Not that he could doubt (that, even with him, is impossible), but that nothing can prepare him for the blow."

"Not my flight? " she returned. "Think of it again."

"Your flight, Lady Dedlock, would spread the whole truth, and a hundred times the whole truth, far and wide. It would be impossible to save the family credit for a day. It is not to be thought of."

There is a quiet decision in his reply, which admits of no remonstrance.

"When I speak of Sir Leicester being the sole consideration, he and the family credit are one. Sir Leicester and the baronetcy, Sir Leicester and Chesney Wold, Sir Leicester and his ancestors and his patrimony"; Mr. Tulkinghorn very dry here; "are, I need not say to you, Lady Dedlock, inseparable."

"Good."

"Therefore," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, pursuing his case in his jog-trot style, "I have much to consider. This is to be hushed up, if it can be. How can it be, if Sir Leicester is driven out of his wits, or laid upon a death-bed? If I inflicted this shock upon him to-morrow morning, how could the immediate change in him be accounted for? What could have caused it? What could have divided you? Lady Dedlock, the wall-chalking and the street-crying would come on directly; and you are to remember that it would not affect you merely (whom I cannot at all consider in this business) but your husband, Lady Dedlock, your husband."

He gets plainer as he gets on, but not an atom more emphatic or animated.

"There is another point of view," he continues, "in which the case presents itself. Sir Leicester

is devoted to you almost to infatuation. He might not be able to overcome that infatuation, even knowing what we know. I am putting an extreme case, but it might be so. If so, it were better that he knew nothing. Better for common sense, better for him, better for me. I must take all this into account, and it combines to render a decision very difficult."

She stands looking out at the same stars without a word. They are beginning to pale, and she looks as if their coldness froze her.

"My experience teaches me," says Mr. Tullingham, who has by this time got his hands in his pockets, and is going on in his business consideration of the matter, like a machine, "my experience teaches me, Lady Dedlock, that most of the people I know would do far better to leave marriage alone. It is at the bottom of three-fourths of their troubles. So I thought when Sir Leicester married, and so I always have thought since. No more about that. I must now be guided by circumstances. In the meanwhile I must beg you to keep your own counsel, and I will keep mine."

"I am to drag my present life on, holding its pains at your pleasure, day by day?" she asks, still looking at the distant sky.

"Yes, I am afraid so, Lady Dedlock."

"It is necessary, you think, that I should be so tied to the stake?"

"I am sure that what I recommend is necessary."

"I am to remain on this gaudy platform, on which my miserable deception has been so long acted, and it is to fall beneath me when you give the signal?" she said slowly.

"Not without notice, Lady Dedlock. I shall take no step without forewarning you."

She asks all her questions as if she were repeating them from memory, or calling them over in her sleep.

"We are to meet as usual?"

"Precisely as usual, if you please?"

"And I am to hide my guilt, as I have done so many years?"

"As you have done so many years. I should not have made that reference myself, Lady Dedlock, but I may now remind you that your secret can be no heavier to you than it was, and is no worse and no better than it was. *I* know it certainly, but I believe we have never wholly trusted each other."

She stands absorbed in the same frozen way for some little time, before asking:

"Is there anything more to be said to-night?"

"Why," Mr. Tulkinghorn returns methodically as he softly rubs his hands, "I should like to be as-



sured of your acquiescence in my arrangements, Lady Dedlock."

"You may be assured of it."

"Good. And I would wish in conclusion to remind you, as a business precaution, in case it should be necessary to recall the fact in any communication with Sir Leicester, that throughout our interview I have expressly stated my sole consideration to be Sir Leicester's feelings and honor, and the family reputation. I should have been happy to have made Lady Dedlock a prominent consideration, too, if the case had admitted of it; but unfortunately it does not."

"I can attest your fidelity, sir."

Both before and after saying it she remains absorbed, but at length moves, and turns, unshaken in her natural and acquired presence, towards the door. Mr. Tulkinghorn opens both the doors exactly as he would have done yesterday, or as he would have done ten years ago, and makes his old-fashioned bow as she passes out. It is not an ordinary look that he receives from the handsome face as it goes into the darkness, and it is not an ordinary movement, though a very slight one, that acknowledges his courtesy. But, as he reflects when he is left alone, the woman has been putting no common constraint upon herself.

He would know it all the better, if he saw the



woman pacing her own rooms with her hair wildly thrown from her flung back face, her hands clasped behind her head, her figure twisted as if by pain. He would think so all the more, if he saw the woman thus hurrying up and down for hours, without fatigue, without intermission, followed by the faithful step upon the Ghost's Walk. But he shuts out the now chilled air, draws the window-curtain, goes to bed, and falls asleep. And truly when the stars go out and the wan day peeps into the turret-chamber, finding him at his oldest, he looks as if the digger and the spade were both commissioned and would soon be digging.

\* \* \* \* \*

From the verdant undulations and the spreading oaks of the Dedlock property, Mr. Tulkinghorn transfers himself to the stale heat and dust of London. His manner of coming and going between the two places, is one of his impenetrabilities. He walks into Chesney Wold as if it were next door to his chambers, and returns to his chambers as if he had never been out of Lincoln's Inn Fields. He neither changes his dress before the journey, nor talks of it afterwards. He melted out of his turret-room this morning, just as now, in the late twilight, he melts into his own square.

The lamplighter is skipping up and down his

ladder on Mr. Tulkinghorn's side of the Fields, when that high-priest of noble mysteries arrives at his own dull court-yard. He ascends the door-steps, and is gliding into the dusky hall, when he encounters, on the top step, a bowing and propitiatory little man.

"Is that Snagsby?"

"Yes, sir. I hope you are well, sir. I was just giving you up, sir, and going home."

"Aye? What is it? What do you want with me?"

"Well, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, holding his hat at the side of his head, in his deference towards his best customer, "I was wishful to say a word to you, sir."

"Can you say it here?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Say it then." The lawyer turns, leans his arms on the iron railing at the top of the steps, and looks at the lamplighter lighting the court-yard.

"It is relating," says Mr. Snagsby, in a mysterious low voice: "it is relating — not to put too fine a point upon it — to the foreigner, sir?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn eyes him with some surprise. "What foreigner?"

"The foreign female, sir. French, if I don't mistake. I am not acquainted with that language myself, but I should judge from her manners and

appearance that she was French; anyways, certainly foreign. Her that was upstairs, sir, when Mr. Bucket and me had the honor of waiting upon you with the sweeping-boy that night."

"Oh! yes, yes. Mademoiselle Hortense."

"Indeed, sir? ". Mr. Snagsby coughs his cough of submission behind his hat. "I am not acquainted myself with the names of foreigners in general, but I have no doubt it *would* be that."

"And what can you have to say, Snagsby," demands Mr. Tulkinghorn, "about her? "

"Well, sir," returns the stationer, shading his communication with his hat, "it falls a little hard upon me. My domestic happiness is very great — at least, it's as great as can be expected, I'm sure — but my little woman is rather given to jealousy. Not to put too fine a point upon it, she is very much given to jealousy. And you see, a foreign female of that genteel appearance coming into the shop, and hovering — I should be the last to make use of a strong expression, if I could avoid it, but hovering, sir — in the court — you know it is — now ain't it? I only put it to yourself, sir."

Mr. Snagsby having said this in a very plaintive manner, throws in a cough of general application to fill up all the blanks.

"Why, what do you mean? " asks Mr. Tulkinghorn.

“Just so, sir,” returns Mr. Snagsby; “I was sure you would feel it yourself, and would excuse the reasonableness of *my* feelings when coupled with the known excitableness of my little woman. You see, the foreign female — which you mentioned her name just now, with quite a native sound, I am sure — caught up the word Snagsby that night, being uncommon quick, and made inquiry, and got the direction and come at dinner-time. Now Guster, our young woman, is timid and has fits, and she, taking fright at the foreigner’s looks — which are fierce — and at a grinding manner that she has of speaking — which is calculated to alarm a weak mind — gave way to it, instead of bearing up against it, and tumbled down the kitchen stairs out of one into another, such fits as I do sometimes think are never gone into, or come out of, in any house but ours. Consequently there was by good fortune ample occupation for my little woman, and only me to answer the shop. When she *did* say that Mr. Tulkinghorn, being always denied to her by his employer (which I had no doubt at the time was a foreign mode of viewing a clerk), she would do herself the pleasure of continually calling at my place until she was let in here. Since then she has been, as I began by saying, hovering — hovering, sir,” Mr. Snagsby repeats the words with pathetic emphasis,



“ in the court. The effects of which movement it is impossible to calculate. I shouldn’t wonder if it might have already given rise to the painfulest mistakes even in the neighbors’ minds, not mentioning (if such a thing was possible) my little woman. Whereas, goodness knows,” says Mr. Snagsby, shaking his head, “I never had an idea of a foreign female, except as being formerly connected with a bunch of brooms and a baby, or at the present time with a tambourine and ear-rings. I never had, I do assure you, sir! ”

Mr. Tulkinghorn had listened gravely to this complaint, and inquires, when the stationer has finished, “ And that’s all, is it, Snagsby? ”

“ Why, yes, sir, that’s all,” says Mr. Snagsby, ending with a cough that plainly adds, “ and it’s enough too — for me.”

“ I don’t know what Mademoiselle Hortense may want or mean, unless she is mad,” says the lawyer.

“ Even if she was, you know, sir,” Mr. Snagsby pleads, “ it wouldn’t be a consolation to have some weapon or another in the form of a foreign dagger, planted in the family.”

“ No,” says the other. “ Well, well! This shall be stopped. I am sorry you have been inconvenienced. If she comes again, send her here.”

Mr. Snagsby, with much bowing and short apolo-



getic coughing, takes his leave, lightened in heart. Mr. Tulkinghorn goes upstairs, saying to himself, "These women were created to give trouble, the whole earth over. The mistress not being enough to deal with, here's the maid now! But I will be short with *this* jade at least! "

So saying he unlocks his door, gropes his way into his murky rooms, lights his candles, and looks about him. Mr. Tulkinghorn takes a small key from his pocket, unlocks a drawer in which there is another key, which unlocks a chest in which there is another, and so comes to the cellar-key, with which he prepares to descend to the regions of old wine. He is going towards the door with a candle in his hand, when a knock comes.

"Who's this? — Aye, aye, mistress, it's you, is it? You appear at a good time. I have just been hearing of you. Now! What do you want? "

He stands the candle on the chimney-piece in the clerk's hall, and taps his dry cheek with the key, as he addresses these words of welcome to Mademoiselle Hortense. That feline personage, with her lips tightly shut, and her eyes looking out at him sideways, softly closes the door before replying.

"I have had great deal of trouble to find you, sir."

"*Have* you! "

"I have been here very often, sir. It has always been said to me, he is not at home, he is engaged, he is this and that, he is not for you."

"Quite right, and quite true."

"Not true. Lies! "

At times, there is a suddenness in the manner of Mademoiselle Hortense so like a bodily spring upon the subject of it, that such subject involuntarily starts and falls back. It is Mr. Tulkinghorn's case at present, though Mademoiselle Hortense, with her eyes almost shut up (but still looking out sideways), is only smiling contemptuously and shaking her head.

"Now, mistress," says the lawyer, tapping the key hastily upon the chimney-piece. "If you have anything to say, say it, say it."

"Sir, you have not use me well. You have been mean and shabby."

"Mean and shabby, eh? " returns the lawyer, rubbing his nose with the key.

"Yes. What is it that I tell you? You know you have. You have attrapped me — caught me — to give you information; you have asked me to show you the dress of mine my Lady must have wore that night, you have prayed me to come in here to meet that boy — Say! Is it not? " Mademoiselle Hortense makes another spring.

"You are a vixen, a vixen! " Mr. Tulkinghorn

seems to meditate, as he looks distrustfully at her; then he replies, "Well, wench, well. I paid you."

"You paid me!" she repeats, with fierce disdain. "Two sovereign! I have not change them, I ref-use them, I des-pise them, I throw them from me!" Which she literally does, taking them out of her bosom as she speaks, and flinging them with such violence on the floor, that they jerk up again into the light before they roll away into corners, and slowly settle down there after spinning vehemently.

"Now!" says Mademoiselle Hortense, darkening her large eyes again. "You have paid me? Eh my God, O yes!"

Mr. Tulkinghorn rubs his head with the key, while she entertains herself with a sarcastic laugh.

"You must be rich, my fair friend," he composedly observes, "to throw money about in that way!"

"I *am* rich," she returns, "I am very rich in hate. I hate my Lady, of all my heart. You know that."

"Know it? How should I know it?"

"Because you have known it perfectly, before you prayed me to give you that information. Because you have known perfectly that I was enr-r-aged!" It appears impossible for Mademoiselle to roll the letter r sufficiently in this word,

notwithstanding that she assists her energetic delivery, by clenching both her hands, and setting all her teeth.

“Oh! I knew that, did I?” says Mr. Tulkinghorn examining the wards of the key.

“Yes, without doubt. I am not blind. You have made sure of me because you knew that. You had reason! I det-est her.” Mademoiselle folds her arms, and throws this last remark at him over one of her shoulders.

“Having said this, have you anything else to say, Mademoiselle?”

“I am not yet placed. Place me well. Find me a good condition! If you cannot, or do not choose to do that, employ me to pursue her, to chase her, to disgrace and to dishonor her. I will help you well, and with a good will. It is what *you* do. Do I know that?”

“You appear to know a good deal,” Mr. Tulkinghorn retorts.

“Do I not? Is it that I am so weak as to believe, like a child, that I come here in that dress to rec-eive that boy, only to decide a little bet, a wager? — Eh my God, O yes!” In this reply, down to the word “wager” inclusive, Mademoiselle has been ironically polite and tender; then, as suddenly dashed into the bitterest and most defiant scorn, with her black eyes in one and the same



moment very nearly shut, and staringly wide open.

"Now, let us see," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, tapping his chin with the key, and looking imperturbably at her, "how this matter stands."

"Ah! Let us see," Mademoiselle assents, with many angry and tight nods of her head.

"You come here to make a remarkably modest demand, which you have just stated, and it not being conceded, you will come again."

"And again," says Mademoiselle, with more tight and angry nods. "And yet again. And yet again. And many times again. In effect, forever! "

"And not only here, but you will go to Mr. Snagsby's, too, perhaps? That visit not succeeding either, you will go again perhaps? "

"And again," repeats Mademoiselle, cataleptic with determination. "And yet again. And yet again. And many times again. In effect, forever! "

"Very well. Now, Mademoiselle Hortense, let me recommend you to take the candle and pick up that money of yours. I think you will find it behind the clerk's partition in the corner yonder."

She merely throws a laugh over her shoulder, and stands her ground with folded arms.

"You will not, eh? "

"No, I will not! "

"So much the poorer you; so much the richer



I! Look, mistress, this is the key of my wine-cellar. It is a large key, but the keys of prisons are larger. In this city, there are houses of correction (where the treadmills are, for women) the gates of which are very strong and heavy, and no doubt the keys too. I am afraid a lady of your spirit and activity would find it an inconvenience to have one of those keys turned upon her for any length of time. What do you think?"

"I think," Mademoiselle replies, without any action, and in a clear obliging voice, "that you are a miserable wretch."

"Probably," returns Mr. Tulkinghorn, quietly blowing his nose. "But I don't ask what you think of myself; I ask what you think of the prison."

"Nothing. What does it matter to me?"

"Why, it matters this much, mistress," says the lawyer deliberately putting away his handkerchief, and adjusting his frill, "the law is so despotic here, that it interferes to prevent any of our good English citizens from being troubled, even by a lady's visits, against his desire. And, on his complaining that he is so troubled, it takes hold of the troublesome lady, and shuts her up in prison under hard discipline. Turns the key upon her, mistress." Illustrating with the cellar key.

"Truly?" returns Mademoiselle, in the same

pleasant voice. "That is droll! But — my faith! — still what does it matter to me?"

"My fair friend," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "make another visit here, or at Mr. Snagsby's, and you shall learn."

"In that case you will send me to the prison, perhaps?"

"Perhaps."

It would be contradictory for one in Mademoiselle's state of agreeable jocularly to foam at the mouth, otherwise a tigerish expansion thereabouts might look as if a very little more would make her do it.

"In a word, mistress," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "I am sorry to be unpolite, but if you ever present yourself uninvited here — or there — again, I will give you over to the police. Their gallantry is great, but they carry troublesome people through the streets in an ignominious manner; strapped down on a board, my good wench."

"I will prove you," whispers Mademoiselle, stretching out her hand, "I will try if you dare to do it!"

"And if," pursues the lawyer, without minding her, "I place you in that good condition of being locked up in jail, it will be some time before you find yourself at liberty again."

"I will prove you," repeats Mademoiselle in her former whisper.

"And now," proceeds the lawyer, still without minding her, "you had better go. Think twice before you come here again."

"Think you," she answers, "twice two hundred times!"

"You were dismissed by your lady, you know," Mr. Tulkinghorn observes, following her out upon the staircase, "as the most implacable and unmanageable of women. Now turn over a new leaf, and take warning by what I say to you. For what I say, I mean; and what I threaten, I will do, mistress."

She goes down without answering or looking behind her. When she is gone, he goes down too; and returning with his cobweb-covered bottle, devotes himself to a leisurely enjoyment of its contents: now and then, as he throws his head back in his chair, catching sight of the pertinacious Roman pointing from the ceiling.

\* \* \* \* \*

The place in Lincolnshire has shut its many eyes again, and the house in town is awake. In Lincolnshire, the Dedlocks of the past doze in their picture-frames and the low wind murmurs

through the long drawing-room as if they were breathing pretty regularly. In town, the Dedlocks of the present rattle in their fire-eyed carriages through the darkness of the night, and the Dedlock Mercuries, with ashes (or hair-powder) on their heads, symptomatic of their humility, loll away the drowsy mornings in the little windows of the hall. The fashionable world — tremendous orb, nearly five miles round — is in full swing, and the solar system works respectfully at its appointed distances.

Where the throng is thickest, where the lights are brightest, where all the senses are ministered to with the greatest delicacy and refinement, Lady Dedlock is. From the shining heights she has scaled and taken she is never absent. Though the belief she of old reposed in herself, as one able to reserve whatsoever she would under her mantle of pride, is beaten down; though she has no assurance that what she is to those around her, she will remain another day; it is not in her nature, when envious eyes are looking on, to yield or to droop. They say of her that she has lately grown more handsome and more haughty.

Mr. Tulkinghorn says nothing; looks nothing. Now, as heretofore, he is to be found in doorways of rooms, with limp white cravat loosely twisted into its old-fashioned tie, receiving patronage from



the Peerage and making no sign. Of all men he is still the last who might be supposed to have any influence upon my Lady. Of all women she is still the last who might be supposed to have any dread of him.

One thing has been much on her mind since their late interview in his turret-room at Chesney Wold. She is now decided, and prepared to throw it off.

Lady Dedlock dines alone in her own room to-day. Lady Dedlock asks, on sitting down to dinner, whether Sir Leicester is gone out yet. Yes. Whether Mr. Tulkinghorn is gone yet? No. Presently she asks again, is he gone *yet*? No. What is he doing? Mercury thinks he is writing letters in the library. Would my Lady wish to see him? Anything but that.

But he wishes to see my Lady. Within a few more minutes he is reported as sending his respects, and could my Lady please to receive him for a word or two after her dinner? My Lady will receive him now. He comes now, apologizing for intruding, even by her permission, while she is at table. When they are alone, my Lady waves her hand to dispense with such mockeries.

“What do you want, sir?”

“Why, Lady Dedlock,” says the lawyer, taking a chair at a little distance from her, and slowly



rubbing his rusty legs up and down, up and down, up and down; "I am rather surprised by the course you have taken."

"Indeed? "

"Yes, decidedly. I was not prepared for it. I consider it a departure from our agreement and your promise. It puts us in a new position, Lady Dedlock. I feel myself under the necessity of saying that I don't approve of it."

He stops in his rubbing, and looks at her, with his hands on his knees. Imperturbable and unchangeable as he is, there is still an indefinable freedom in his manner, which is new, and which does not escape this woman's observation.

"I do not quite understand you."

"O yes, you do, I think. I think you do. Come, come, Lady Dedlock, we must not fence and parry now. You know you like this girl."

"Well, sir? "

"And you know — and I know — that you have not sent her away for the reasons you have assigned, but for the purpose of separating her as much as possible from — excuse my mentioning it as a matter of business — any reproach and exposure that impend over yourself."

"Well, sir? "

"Well, Lady Dedlock," returns the lawyer, crossing his legs and nursing the uppermost knee. "I

object to that, I consider that a dangerous proceeding. I know it to be unnecessary, and calculated to awaken speculation, doubt, rumor, I don't know what, in the house. Besides, it is a violation of our agreement. You were to be exactly what you were before. Whereas, it must be evident to yourself, as it is to me, that you have been this evening very different from what you were before. Why, bless my soul, Lady Dedlock, transparently so!"

"If, sir," she begins, "in my knowledge of my secret ——" But he interrupts her.

"Now, Lady Dedlock, this is a matter of business, and in a matter of business the ground cannot be kept too clear. It is no longer your secret. Excuse me. That is just the mistake. It is my secret, in trust for Sir Leicester and the family. If it were your secret, Lady Dedlock, we should not be here, holding this conversation."

"That is very true. If, in my knowledge of *the* secret, I do what I can to spare an innocent girl (especially, remembering your own reference to her when you told my story to the assembled guests at Chesney Wold) from the taint of my impending shame, I act upon a resolution I have taken. Nothing in the world, and no one in the world, could shake it, or could move me." This she says with great deliberation and distinctness, and with

no more outward passion than himself. As for him, he methodically discusses his matter of business, as if she were any insensible instrument used in business.

"Really? Then you see, Lady Dedlock," he returns, "you are not to be trusted. You have put the case in a perfectly plain way, and according to the literal fact; and, that being the case, you are not to be trusted."

"Perhaps you may remember that I expressed some anxiety on this same point, when we spoke at night at Chesney Wold?"

"Yes," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, coolly getting up and standing on the hearth. "Yes. I recollect, Lady Dedlock, that you certainly referred to the girl; but that was before we came to our arrangement, and both the letter and the spirit of our arrangement altogether precluded any action on your part, founded upon my discovery. There can be no doubt about that. As to sparing the girl, of what importance or value is she? Spare! Lady Dedlock, here is a family name compromised. One might have supposed that the course was straight on — over everything, neither to the right nor to the left, regardless of all considerations in the way, sparing nothing, treading everything under foot."

She has been looking at the table. She lifts up

her eyes, and looks at him. There is a stern expression on her face, and a part of her lower lip is compressed under her teeth. "This woman understands me," Mr. Tulkinghorn thinks, as she lets her glance fall again. "*She* cannot be spared. Why should she spare others?"

For a little while they are silent. Lady Dedlock has eaten no dinner, but has twice or thrice poured out water with a steady hand and drunk it. She rises from table, takes a lounging-chair, and reclines in it, shading her face. There is nothing in her manner to express weakness or excite compassion. It is thoughtful, gloomy, concentrated. "This woman," thinks Mr. Tulkinghorn, standing on the hearth, again a dark object closing up her view, "is a study."

He studies her at his leisure, not speaking for a time. She too studies something at her leisure. She is not the first to speak; appearing indeed so unlikely to be so, though he stood there until midnight, that even he is driven upon breaking silence.

"Lady Dedlock, the most disagreeable part of this business interview remains; but it is business. Our agreement is broken. A lady of your sense and strength of character will be prepared for my now declaring it void, and taking my own course."



"I am quite prepared."

Mr. Tulkinghorn inclines his head. "That is all I have to trouble you with, Lady Dedlock."

She stops him as he is moving out of the room, by asking, "This is the notice I was to receive? I wish not to misapprehend you."

"Not exactly the notice you were to receive, Lady Dedlock, because the contemplated notice supposed the agreement to have been observed. But virtually the same, virtually the same. The difference is merely in a lawyer's mind."

"You intend to give me no other notice? "

"You are right. No."

"Do you contemplate undeceiving Sir Leicester to-night? "

"A home question!" says Mr Tulkinghorn, with a slight smile, and cautiously shaking his head at the shaded face. "No, not to-night."

"To-morrow? "

"All things considered, I had better decline answering that question, Lady Dedlock. If I were to say I don't know when, exactly, you would not believe me, and it would answer no purpose. It may be to-morrow. I would rather say no more. You are prepared, and I hold out no expectations which circumstances might fail to justify. I wish you good evening."

She removes her hand, turns her pale face



towards him as he walks silently to the door, and stops him once again as he is about to open it.

"Do you intend to remain in the house any time? I heard you were writing in the library. Are you going to return there?"

"Only for my hat. I am going home."

She bows her eyes rather than her head, the movement is so slight and curious; and he withdraws. Clear of the room he looks at his watch, but is inclined to doubt it by a minute or thereabouts. There is a splendid clock upon the staircase, famous, as splendid clocks not often are, for its accuracy. "And what do *you* say," Mr. Tulkinghorn inquires, referring to it. "What do you say?"

If it said now, "Don't go home!" What a famous clock, hereafter, if it said to-night of all the nights that it has counted off, to this old man of all the young men and old men who ever stood before it, "Don't go home!" With its sharp clear bell, it strikes three-quarters after seven, and ticks on again. "Why, you are worse than I thought you," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, muttering reproof to his watch. "Two minutes wrong? At this rate you won't last my time." What a watch to return good for evil, if it ticked in answer, "Don't go home!"

He passes out into the streets, and walks on,

with his hands behind him, under the shadow of the lofty houses, many of whose mysteries, difficulties, mortgages, delicate affairs of all kinds, are treasured up within his old black satin waistcoat. He is in the confidence of the very bricks and mortar. The high chimney-stacks telegraph family secrets to him. Yet there is not a voice in a mile of them to whisper, "Don't go home!"

Through the stir and motion of the commoner streets; through the roar and jar of many vehicles, many feet, many voices; with the blazing shop-lights lighting him on, the west wind blowing him on, and the crowd pressing him on; he is pitilessly urged on his way, and nothing meets him, murmuring, "Don't go home!" Arrived at last in his dull room, to light his candles, and look round and up, and see the Roman pointing from the ceiling, there is no new significance in the Roman's hand to-night, or in the flutter of the attendant groups, to give him the late warning, "Don't come here!"

It is a moonlight night; but the moon, being past the full, is only now rising over the great wilderness of London. The stars are shining as they shone above the turret-leads at Chesney Wold. This woman, as he has of late been so accustomed to call her, looks out upon them. Her soul is turbulent within her; she is sick at heart,

and restless. The large rooms are too cramped and close. She cannot endure their restraint, and will walk alone in a neighboring garden.

Too capricious and imperious in all she does, to be the cause of much surprise in those about her as to anything she does, this woman, loosely muffled, goes out into the moonlight. Mercury attends with the key. Having opened the garden-gate, he delivers the key into his Lady's hands at her request, and is bidden to go back. She will walk there some time, to ease her aching head. She may be an hour; she may be more. She needs no further escort. The gate shuts upon its spring with a clash, and he leaves her, passing on into the dark shades of some trees.

A fine night, and a bright large moon, and multitudes of stars. Mr. Tulkinghorn, in repairing to his cellar, and in opening and shutting those resounding doors, has to cross a little prison-like yard. He looks up casually, thinking what a fine night, what a bright large moon, what multitudes of stars! A quiet night, too.

What's that? Who fired a gun or pistol? Where was it?

The few foot-passengers start, stop, and stare about them. Some windows and doors are opened, and people come out to look. It was a loud report, and echoed and rattled heavily. It shook one

house, or so a man says who was passing. It has aroused all the dogs in the neighborhood, who bark vehemently. Terrified cats scamper across the road. While the dogs are yet barking and howling — there is one dog howling like a demon — the church-clocks, as if they were startled too, begin to strike. The hum from the streets, likewise, seems to swell into a shout. But it is soon over. Before the last clock begins to strike ten, there is a lull. When it has ceased, the fine night, the bright large moon, and multitudes of stars, are left at peace again.

Has Mr. Tulkinghorn been disturbed? His windows are dark and quiet, and his door is shut. It must be something unusual indeed, to bring him out of his shell. Nothing is heard of him, nothing is seen of him. What power of cannon might it take to shake that rusty old man out of his immovable composure?

But, a little after the coming of the day, come people to clean the rooms. The foremost of them goes wild; for, looking up at the frescoed ceiling, and looking down at what is below it, that person shrieks and flies. The others, looking in as the first one looked, shriek and fly too, and there is an alarm in the street.

What does it mean? No light is admitted into the darkened chamber, and people unaccustomed



to it, enter, and treading softly, but heavily, carry a weight into the bedroom, and lay it down. There is whispering and wondering all day, strict search of every corner, careful tracing of steps, and careful noting of the disposition of every article of furniture.

On a table are a bottle (nearly full of wine) and a glass upon it, and two candles that were blown out suddenly, soon after being lighted. There is an empty chair, and a stain upon the ground before it that might be almost covered with a hand. These objects lie directly within range.

It shall happen surely, through many years to come, that ghostly stories shall be told of the stain upon the floor, so easy to be covered, so hard to be got out. For, Mr. Tulkinghorn's time is over for evermore; lying face downward on the floor, shot through the heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Bucket and his fat forefinger are much in consultation together under existing circumstances. When Mr. Bucket has a matter of this pressing interest under his consideration, the fat forefinger seems to rise to the dignity of a familiar demon. He puts it to his ears, and it whispers information;



he puts it to his lips, and it enjoins him to secrecy; he rubs it over his nose, and it sharpens his scent; he shakes it before a guilty man, and it charms him to his destruction. The Augurs of the Detective Temple invariably predict, that when Mr. Bucket and that finger are in much conference, a terrible avenger will be heard of before long.

Otherwise mildly studious in his observation of human nature, on the whole a benignant philosopher not disposed to be severe upon the follies of mankind, Mr. Bucket pervades a vast number of houses, and strolls about an infinity of streets: to outward appearance rather languishing for want of an object. He is in the friendliest condition towards his species, and will drink with most of them. He is free with his money, affable in his manners, innocent in his conversation — but, through the placid stream of his life, there glides an under-current of forefinger.

Time and place cannot bind Mr. Bucket. Like man in the abstract, he is here to-day and gone to-morrow — but, very unlike man indeed, he is here again the next day. This evening he will be casually looking into the iron extinguishers at the door of Sir Leicester Dedlock's house in town; and to-morrow morning he will be walking on the leads at Chesney Wold, where erst the old man walked whose ghost is propitiated with a hundred

guineas. Drawers, desks, pockets, all things belonging to him, Mr. Bucket examines.

It is likely that these occupations are irreconcilable with home enjoyment, but it is certain that Mr. Bucket at present does not go home. Though in general he highly appreciates the society of Mrs. Bucket — a lady of a natural detective genius, which, if it had been improved by professional exercise, might have done great things, but which has paused at the level of a clever amateur — he holds himself aloof from that dear solace. Mrs. Bucket is dependent on their lodger (fortunately an amiable lady in whom she takes an interest) for companionship and conversation.

A great crowd assembles in Lincoln's Inn Fields on the day of the funeral. Sir Leicester Dedlock attends the ceremony in person. The Peerage contributes more four-wheeled affliction than has ever been seen in that neighborhood. Such is the assemblage of armorial bearings on coach panels, that the Heralds' College might be supposed to have lost its father and mother at a blow.

Quiet among the undertakers and the equipages, and the calves of so many legs all steeped in grief, Mr. Bucket sits concealed in one of the carriages, and at his ease surveys the crowd through the lattice blinds. He has a keen eye for a crowd — as for what not? — and looking here and there,

now from this side of the carriage, now from the other, now up at the house windows, now along the people's heads, nothing escapes him.

"And there you are, my partner, eh?" says Mr. Bucket to himself, apostrophizing Mrs. Bucket, stationed, by his favor, on the steps of the deceased's house. "And so you are! And so you are! And very well indeed you are looking, Mrs. Bucket!"

The procession has not started yet, but is waiting for the cause of its assemblage to be brought out. Mr. Bucket, in the foremost emblazoned carriage, uses his two fat forefingers to hold the lattice a hair's breadth open while he looks.

And it says a great deal for his attachment, as a husband, that he is still occupied with Mrs. B. "There you are, my partner, eh?" he murmuringly repeats. "And our lodger with you. I'm taking notice of you, Mrs. Bucket; I hope you're all right in your health, my dear!"

Not another word does Mr. Bucket say; but sits with most attentive eyes until the sacked depository of noble secrets is brought down —— Where are all those secrets now? Does he keep them yet? Did they fly with him on that sudden journey? — and until the procession moves, and Mr. Bucket's view is changed. After which he composes himself for an easy ride; and takes note of the fittings of

the carriage, in case he should ever find such knowledge useful.

Contrast enough between Mr. Tulkinghorn shut up in his dark carriage, and Mr. Bucket shut up in *his*. Between the immeasurable track of space beyond the little wound that has thrown the one into the fixed sleep which jolts so heavily over the stones of the streets, and the narrow track of blood which keeps the other in the watchful state expressed in every hair of his head! But it is all one to both; neither is troubled about that.

Mr. Bucket sits out the procession in his own easy manner, and glides from the carriage when the opportunity he has settled with himself arrives. He makes for Sir Leicester Dedlock's, which is at present a sort of home to him, where he comes and goes as he likes at all hours, where he is always welcome and made much of, where he knows the whole establishment, and walks in an atmosphere of mysterious greatness.

No knocking or ringing for Mr. Bucket. He has caused himself to be provided with a key, and can pass at his pleasure. As he is crossing the hall, Mercury informs him, "Here's another letter for you, Mr. Bucket, come by post," and gives it to him.

"Another one, eh?" says Mr. Bucket.

If Mercury should chance to be possessed by



any lingering curiosity as to Mr. Bucket's letters, that wary person is not the man to gratify it. Mr. Bucket looks at him as if his face were a vista of some miles in length, and he were leisurely contemplating the same.

"Do you happen to carry a box?" says Mr. Bucket.

Unfortunately Mercury is no snuff-taker.

"Could you fetch me a pinch from anywheres?" says Mr. Bucket. "Thankee. It don't matter what it is; I'm not particular as to the kind. Thankee!"

Having leisurely helped himself from a canister borrowed from somebody downstairs for the purpose, and having made a considerable show of tasting it, first with one side of his nose and then with the other, Mr. Bucket, with much deliberation, pronounces it of the right sort, and goes on, letter in hand.

Now, although Mr. Bucket walks upstairs to the little library within the larger one, with the face of a man who receives some scores of letters every day, it happens that much correspondence is not incidental to his life. He is no great scribe; rather handling his pen like the pocketstaff he carries about with him always convenient to his grasp; and discourages correspondence with himself in others, as being too artless and direct a way of doing delicate business. Further, he often sees



damaging letters produced in evidence, and has occasion to reflect that it was a green thing to write them. For these reasons he has very little to do with letters, either as sender or receiver. And yet he has received a round half-dozen within the last twenty-four hours.

“And this,” says Mr. Bucket, spreading it out on the table, “is in the same hand, and consists of the same two words.”

What two words?

He turns the key in the door, ungirdles his black pocketbook (book of fate to many), lays another letter by it, and reads, boldly written in each, “LADY DEDLOCK.”

“Yes, yes,” says Mr. Bucket. “But I could have made the money without this anonymous information.”

Having put the letters in his book of fate, and girdling it up again, he unlocks the door just in time to admit his dinner, which is brought upon a goodly tray, with a decanter of sherry. Mr. Bucket frequently observes, in friendly circles where there is no restraint, that he likes a toothful of your fine old brown East Inder sherry better than anything you can offer him. Consequently he fills and empties his glass, with a smack of his lips; and is proceeding with his refreshment, when an idea enters his mind.

Mr. Bucket softly opens the door of communica-

tion between that room and the next, and looks in. The library is deserted, and the fire is sinking low. Mr. Bucket's eye, after taking a pigeon-flight around the room, alights upon a table where letters are usually put as they arrive. Several letters for Sir Leicester are upon it. Mr. Bucket draws near and examines the directions. "No," he says, "there's none in that hand. It's only me as is written to. I can break it to Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, to-morrow."

With that he returns to finish his dinner with a good appetite; and after a light nap, is summoned into the drawing-room. Sir Leicester has received him there these several evenings past, to know whether he has anything to report. The debilitated cousin (much exhausted by the funeral), and Volumnia, are in attendance.

Mr. Bucket makes three distinctly different bows to these three people. A bow of homage to Sir Leicester, a bow of gallantry to Volumnia, and a bow of recognition to the debilitated cousin; to whom it airily says, "You are a swell about town, and you know me, and I know you." Having distributed these little specimens of his tact, Mr. Bucket rubs his hands.

"Have you anything new to communicate, officer?" inquires Sir Leicester. "Do you wish to hold any conversation with me in private?"

“Why — not to-night, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet.”

“Because my time,” pursues Sir Leicester, “is wholly at your disposal, with a view to the vindication of the outraged majesty of the law.”

Mr. Bucket coughs and glances at Volumnia, rouged and necklaced, as though he would respectfully observe, “I do assure you, you’re a pretty creetur. I’ve seen hundreds worse-looking at your time of life, I have indeed.”

The fair Volumnia, not quite unconscious perhaps of the humanizing influence of her charms, pauses in the writing of cocked-hat notes, and meditatively adjusts the pearl necklace. Mr. Bucket prices that decoration in his mind, and thinks it as likely as not that Volumnia is writing poetry.

“If I have not,” pursues Sir Leicester, “in the most emphatic manner, adjured you, officer, to exercise your utmost skill in this atrocious case, I particularly desire to take the present opportunity of rectifying any omission I may have made. Let no expense be a consideration. I am prepared to defray all charges. You can incur none, in pursuit of the object you have undertaken, that I shall hesitate for a moment to bear.”

Mr. Bucket made Sir Leicester’s bow again, as a response to this liberality.

“My mind,” Sir Leicester adds, with generous warmth, “has not, as may be easily supposed, recovered its tone since the late diabolical occurrence. It is not likely ever to recover its tone. But it is full of indignation to-night, after undergoing the ordeal of consigning to the tomb the remains of a faithful, a zealous, a devoted adherent.”

Sir Leicester’s voice trembles, and his gray hair stirs upon his head. Tears are in his eyes; the best part of his nature is aroused.

“I declare,” he says, “I solemnly declare that until this crime is discovered, and, in the course of justice, punished, I almost feel as if there were a stain upon my name. A gentleman who has devoted a large portion of his life to me, a gentleman who has devoted the last day of his life to me, a gentleman who has constantly sat at my table and slept under my roof, goes from my house to his own, and is struck down within an hour of his leaving my house. I cannot say but that he may have been followed from my house, watched at my house, even first marked because of his association with my house — which may have suggested his possessing greater wealth and being altogether of greater importance than his own retiring demeanor would have indicated. If I cannot, with my means and influence, and my position, bring all the per-



petrators of such a crime to light, I fail in the assertion of my respect for that gentleman's memory, and of my fidelity towards one who was ever faithful to me."

While he makes this protestation with great emotion and earnestness, looking round the room as if he were addressing an assembly, Mr. Bucket glances at him with an observant gravity in which there might be, but for the audacity of the thought, a touch of compassion.

"The ceremony of to-day," continues Sir Leicester, "strikingly illustrative of the respect in which my deceased friend;" he lays a stress upon the word, for death levels all distinction; "was held by the flower of the land, has, I say, aggravated the shock I have received from this most horrible and audacious crime. If it were my brother who had committed it, I would not spare him."

Mr. Bucket looks very grave. Volumnia remarks of the deceased that he was the trustiest and dearest person!

"You must feel it as a deprivation to you, miss," replied Mr. Bucket, soothingly, "no doubt. He was calculated to *be* a deprivation, I'm sure he was."

Volumnia gives Mr. Bucket to understand, in reply, that her sensitive mind is fully made up

never to get the better of it as long as she lives; that her nerves are unstrung for ever; and that she has not the least expectation of ever smiling again.

"It gives a start to a delicate female," says Mr. Bucket, sympathetically, "but it'll wear off."

Volumnia wishes of all things to know what is doing? Whether they are going to convict, or whatever it is, that dreadful soldier? Whether he had any accomplices, or whatever the thing is called in the law? And a great deal more to the like artless purpose.

"Why, you see, miss," returns Mr. Bucket, bringing the finger into persuasive action—and such is his natural gallantry that he had almost said, my dear; "it ain't easy to answer those questions at the present moment. Not at the present moment. I've kept myself on this case, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," whom Mr. Bucket takes into the conversation in right of his importance, "morning, noon, and night. But for a glass or two of sherry, I don't think I could have had my mind so much upon the stretch as it has been. I *could* answer your question miss, but duty forbids it. Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, will very soon be made acquainted with all that has been traced. And I hope that he may find it;"

Mr. Bucket again looks grave; "to his satisfaction."

The debilitated cousin only hopes some feler'll be executed — zample. Thinks more interest's wanted — get man hanged presentime — than get man place ten thousand a year. Hasn't a doubt — zample — far better hang wrong feler than no feler.

"*You* know life, you know, sir," says Mr. Bucket, with a complimentary twinkle of his eye and crook of his finger, "and you can confirm what I've mentioned to this lady. *You* don't want to be told, that, from information I have received, I have gone to work. You're up to what a lady can't be expected to be up to. Lord! especially in your elevated station of society, miss," says Mr. Bucket, quite reddening at another narrow escape from my dear.

"The officer, Volumnia," observes Sir Leicester, "is faithful to his duty, and perfectly right."

Mr. Bucket murmurs, "Glad to have the honor o' your approbation, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet."

"In fact, Volumnia," proceeds Sir Leicester, "it is not holding up a good model for imitation, to ask the officer any such questions as you have put to him. He is the best judge of his own responsi-

bility; he acts upon his responsibility. And it does not become us, who assist in making the laws, to impede or interfere with those who carry them into execution. Or," says Sir Leicester, somewhat sternly, for Volumnia was going to cut in before he had rounded his sentence; "or who vindicate their outraged majesty."

Volumnia with all humility explains that she has not merely the plea of curiosity to urge (in common with the giddy youth of her sex in general), but that she is perfectly dying with regret and interest for the darling man whose loss they all deplore.

"Very well, Volumnia," returns Sir Leicester. "Then you cannot be too discreet."

Mr. Bucket takes the opportunity of a pause to be heard again.

"Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, I have no objections to telling this lady, with your leave and among ourselves, that I look upon the case as pretty well complete. It is a beautiful case — a beautiful case — and what little is wanting to complete it, I expect to be able to supply in a few hours."

"I am very glad indeed to hear it," says Sir Leicester. "Highly creditable to you."

"Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," returns Mr. Bucket, very seriously, "I hope it may at one



and the same time do me credit, and prove satisfactory to all. When I depict it as a beautiful case, you see, miss," Mr. Bucket goes on, glancing gravely at Sir Leicester, "I mean from my point of view. As considered from other points of view, such cases will always involve more or less unpleasantness. Very strange things comes to our knowledge in families, miss; bless your heart, what you would think to be phenomenons, quite."

Volumnia, with her innocent little scream, supposes so.

"Aye, and even in gen-teel families, in high families, in great families," says Mr. Bucket, again gravely eying Sir Leicester aside. "I have had the honor of being employed in high families before; and you have no idea — come, I'll go so far as to say not even *you* have any idea, sir," this to the debilitated cousin, "what games goes on!"

The cousin, who has been casting sofa-pillows on his head, in a prostration of boredom, yawns, "Vayli" — being the used-up for "very likely."

Sir Leicester, deeming it time to dismiss the officer, here majestically interposes with the words, "Very good. Thank you!" and also with a wave of his hand, implying not only that there is an end of the discourse, but that if high families fall into low habits they must take the consequences. "You will not forget, officer," he adds, with con-

descension, "that I am at your disposal when you please."

Mr. Bucket (still grave) inquires if to-morrow morning, now, would suit, in case he should be as for'ard as he expects to be? Sir Leicester replies, "All times are alike to me." Mr. Bucket makes his three bows, and is withdrawing, when a forgotten point occurs to him.

"Might I ask, by-the-bye," he says, in a low voice, cautiously returning, "who posted the reward-bill on the staircase?"

"I ordered it to be put up there," replies Sir Leicester.

"Would it be considered a liberty, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, if I was to ask you why?"

"Not at all. I chose it as a conspicuous part of the house. I think it cannot be too prominently kept before the whole establishment. I wish my people to be impressed with the enormity of the crime, the determination to punish it, and the hopelessness of escape. At the same time, officer, if you in your better knowledge of the subject see any objection——"

Mr. Bucket sees none now; the bill having been put up, had better not be taken down. Repeating his three bows he withdraws: closing the door on Volumnia's little scream, which is a preliminary

to her remarking that that charmingly horrible person is a perfect Blue Chamber.

In his fondness for society, and his adaptability to all grades, Mr. Bucket is presently standing before the hall-fire — bright and warm on the early winter night — admiring Mercury.

“Why, you’re six foot two, I suppose?” says Mr. Bucket.

“Three,” says Mercury.

“Are you so much? But then, you see, you’re broad in proportion, and don’t look it. You’re not one of the weak-legged ones, you ain’t. Was you ever modeled now?” Mr. Bucket asks, conveying the expression of an artist into the turn of his eye and head.

Mercury never was modeled.

“Then you ought to be, you know,” says Mr. Bucket; “and a friend of mine that you’ll hear of one day as a Royal Academy sculptor, would stand something handsome to make a drawing of your proportions for the marble. My Lady’s out, ain’t she?”

“Out to dinner.”

“Goes out pretty well every day, don’t she?”

“Yes.”

“Not to be wondered at!” says Mr. Bucket.

“Such a fine woman as her, so handsome and so

graceful and so elegant, is like a fresh lemon on a dinner-table, ornamental wherever she goes. Was your father in the same way of life as yourself? ”

Answer in the negative.

“ Mine was,” says Mr. Bucket. “ My father was first a page, then a footman, then a butler, then a steward, then an innkeeper. Lived universally respected, and died lamented. Said with his last breath that he considered service the most honorable part of his career, and so it was. I’ve a brother in the service, *and* a brother-in-law. My Lady a good temper? ”

Mercury replies, “ As good as you can expect.”

“ Ah! ” says Mr. Bucket, “ a little spoilt? A little capricious? Lord! What can you anticipate when they are so handsome as that? And we like ’em all the better for it, don’t we? ”

Mercury, with his hands in the pockets of his bright peach-blossom small-clothes, stretches his symmetrical silky legs with the air of a man of gallantry, and can’t deny it. Come the roll of wheels, and a violent ringing at the bell. “ Talk of the angels,” says Mr. Bucket. “ Here she is! ”

The doors are thrown open, and she passes through the hall. Still very pale, she is dressed in slight mourning, and wears two beautiful bracelets. Either their beauty, or the beauty of her arms, is particularly attractive to Mr. Bucket. He



looks at them with an eager eye, and rattles something in his pockets — halfpence perhaps.

Noticing him at his distance, she turns an inquiring look on the other Mercury who has brought her home.

“Mr. Bucket, my Lady.”

Mr. Bucket makes a leg, and comes forward, passing his familiar demon over the region of his mouth.

“Are you waiting to see Sir Leicester?”

“No, my Lady, I’ve seen him!”

“Have you anything to say to me?”

“Not just at present, my Lady.”

“Have you made any new discoveries?”

“A few, my Lady,”

This is merely in passing. She scarcely makes a stop, and sweeps upstairs alone. Mr. Bucket, moving towards the staircase foot, watches her as she goes up the steps the old man came down to his grave; past murderous groups of statuary, repeated with their shadowy weapons on the wall; past the printed bill, which she looks at going by; out of view.

“She’s a lovely woman, too, she really is,” says Mr. Bucket, coming back to Mercury. “Don’t look quite healthy though.”

Is not quite healthy, Mercury informs him. Suffers much from headaches.

Really? That's a pity! Walking Mr. Bucket would recommend for that. Well, she tries walking, Mercury rejoins. Walks sometimes for two hours, when she has them bad. By night too.

"Are you sure you're quite so much as six foot three?" asks Mr. Bucket, "begging your pardon for interrupting you a moment?"

Not a doubt about it.

"You're so well put together that I shouldn't have thought it. But the household troops, though considered fine men, are built so straggling.—Walks by night, does she? When it's moonlight, though?"

O yes. When it's moonlight! Of course. O, of course! Conversational and acquiescent on both sides.

"I suppose you ain't in the habit of walking yourself?" says Mr. Bucket. "Not much time for it, I should say?"

Besides which, Mercury don't like it. Prefers carriage exercise.

"To be sure," says Mr. Bucket. "That makes a difference. Now I think of it," says Mr. Bucket, warming his hands, and looking pleasantly at the blaze, "she went out walking, the very night of this business."

"To be sure she did! I let her into the garden over the way."

"And left her there. Certainly you did. I saw you doing it."

"I didn't see *you*," says Mercury.

"I was rather in a hurry," returns Mr. Bucket, "for I was going to visit a aunt of mine that lives at Chelsea — next door but two to the old original Bun House — ninety year old the old lady is, a single woman, and got a little property. Yes, I chanced to be passing at the time. Let's see. What time might it be? It wasn't ten."

"Half-past nine."

"You're right. So it was. And if I don't deceive myself, my Lady was muffled in a loose black mantle, with a deep fringe to it?"

"Of course she was."

Of course she was. Mr. Bucket must return to a little work he has to get on with upstairs; but he must shake hands with Mercury, in acknowledgment of his agreeable conversation, and will he — this is all he asks — will he, when he has a leisure half-hour, think of bestowing it on that Royal Academy sculptor, for the advantage of both parties?

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Refreshed by sleep, Mr. Bucket rises betimes in the morning, and prepares for a field-day. Smartened up by the aid of a clean shirt, and a wet

hairbrush, with which instrument, on occasions of ceremony, he lubricates such thin locks as remain to him after his life of severe study, Mr. Bucket lays in a breakfast of two mutton chops as a foundation to work upon, together with tea, eggs, toast, and marmalade on a corresponding scale. Having much enjoyed these strengthening matters, and having held subtle conference with his familiar demon, he confidently instructs Mercury "just to mention quietly to Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, that whenever he's ready for me, I'm ready for him." A gracious message being returned that Sir Leicester will expedite his dressing and join Mr. Bucket in the library within ten minutes, Mr. Bucket repairs to that apartment; and stands before the fire, with his finger on his chin, looking at the blazing coals.

Thoughtful Mr. Bucket is; as a man may be, with weighty work to do; but composed, sure, confident. From the expression of his face, he might be a famous whist-player for a large stake — say a hundred guineas certain — with the game in his hand, but with a high reputation involved in his playing his hand out to the last card, in a masterly way. Not in the least anxious or disturbed is Mr. Bucket when Sir Leicester appears; but he eyes the baronet aside as he comes slowly to his easy-chair, with that observant gravity of



yesterday, in which there might have been, but for the audacity of the idea, a touch of compassion.

“I am sorry to have kept you waiting, officer, but I am rather later than my usual hour this morning. I am not well. The agitation, and the indignation from which I have recently suffered, have been too much for me. I am subject to — gout”; Sir Leicester was going to say indisposition, and would have said it to anybody else, but Mr. Bucket palpably knows all about it; “and recent circumstances have brought it on.”

As he takes his seat with some difficulty, and with an air of pain, Mr. Bucket draws a little nearer, standing with one of his large hands on the library-table.

“I am not aware, officer,” Sir Leicester observes, raising his eyes to his face, “whether you wish us to be alone; but that is entirely as you please. If you do, well and good. If not, Miss Dedlock would be interested ——”

“Why, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet,” returns Mr. Bucket, with his head persuasively on one side, and his forefinger pendant at one ear like an ear-ring, “we can’t be too private just at present. You will presently see that we can’t be too private. A lady, under the circumstances, and especially in Miss Dedlock’s elevated station of society, can’t but be agreeable to me; but speak-

ing without a view to myself, I will take the liberty of assuring you that *I* know we can't be too private."

"That is enough."

"So much so, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," Mr. Bucket resumes, "that I was on the point of asking your permission to turn the key in the door."

"By all means." Mr. Bucket skillfully and softly takes that precaution; stooping on his knee for a moment, from mere force of habit, so to adjust the key in the lock as that no one shall peep in from the outer side.

"Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, I mentioned yesterday evening, that I wanted but a very little to complete this case. I have now completed it, and collected proof against the person who did this crime."

"Against the soldier?"

"No, Sir Leicester Dedlock; not the soldier."

Sir Leicester looks astounded, and inquires, "Is the man in custody?"

Mr. Bucket tells him, after a pause, "It was a woman."

Sir Leicester leans back in his chair, and breathlessly ejaculates, "Good Heaven!"

"Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," Mr. Bucket begins, standing over him with one hand

spread out on the library-table, and the forefinger of the other in impressive use, "It's my duty to prepare you for a train of circumstances that may, and I go so far as to say that will, give you a shock. But, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, you are a gentleman; and I know what a gentleman is, and what a gentleman is capable of. A gentleman can bear a shock, when it must come, boldly and steadily. A gentleman can make up his mind to stand up against almost any blow. Why, take yourself, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet. If there's a blow to be inflicted on you, you naturally think of your family. You bear it well on their accounts, and to maintain the family credit. That's the way you argue, and that's the way you act, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet."

Sir Leicester, leaning back in his chair, and grasping the elbows, sits looking at him with a stony face.

"Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock," proceeds Mr. Bucket, "thus preparing you, let me beg of you not to trouble your mind, for a moment, as to anything having come to *my* knowledge. I know so much about so many characters, high and low, that a piece of information more or less, don't signify a straw. I don't suppose there's a move on the board that would surprise *me*; and as to this or that move having taken place, why, my know-

ing it is no odds at all; any possible move whatever (provided it's in the wrong direction) being a probable move according to my experience. Therefore, what I say to you, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, is, don't you go and let yourself be put out of the way, because of my knowing anything of your family affairs."

"I thank you for your preparation," returns Sir Leicester, after a silence, without moving hand, foot, or feature; "which I hope is not necessary, though I give it credit for being well intended. Be so good as to go on. Also;" Sir Leicester seems to shrink in the shadow of his figure; "also take a seat, if you have no objection."

None at all. Mr. Bucket brings a chair, and diminishes his shadow. "Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, with this short preface I come to the point. Lady Dedlock ——"

Sir Leicester raises himself in his seat, and stares at him fiercely. Mr. Bucket brings the finger into play as an emollient.

"Lady Dedlock, you see she's universally admired. That's what her Ladyship is; she's universally admired," says Mr. Bucket.

"I would greatly prefer, officer," Sir Leicester returns, stiffly, "my Lady's name being entirely omitted from this discussion."

"So would I, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, but — it's impossible."



“Impossible?”

Mr. Bucket shakes his relentless head.

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, it’s altogether impossible. What I have got to say is about her Ladyship. She is the pivot it all turns on.”

“Officer,” retorts Sir Leicester, with a fiery eye, and a quivering lip, “you know your duty. Do your duty; but be careful not to overstep it. I would not suffer it. I would not endure it. You bring my Lady’s name into this communication, upon your responsibility — upon your responsibility. My Lady’s name is not a name for common persons to trifle with!”

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, I say what I must say; and no more.”

“I hope it may prove so. Very well. Go on. Go on, sir!”

Glancing at the angry eyes which now avoid him, and at the angry figure trembling from head to foot, yet striving to be still, Mr. Bucket feels his way with his forefinger, and in a low voice proceeds.

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, it becomes my duty to tell you that the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn long entertained mistrust and suspicions of Lady Dedlock.”

“If he had dared to breathe them to me, sir — which he never did — I would have killed him myself!” exclaims Sir Leicester, striking his hand

upon the table. But in the very heat and fury of the act, he stops, fixed by the knowing eyes of Mr. Bucket, whose forefinger is slowly going, and who, with mingled confidence and patience, shakes his head.

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn was deep and close; and what he fully had in his mind in the very beginning, I can’t take upon myself to say. But I know from his lips, that he long ago suspected Lady Dedlock of having discovered, through the sight of some handwriting — in this very house, and when you yourself, Sir Leicester Dedlock, were present — the existence, in great poverty, of a certain person, who had been her lover before you courted her, and who ought to have been her husband;” Mr. Bucket stops, and deliberately repeats, “ought to have been her husband; not a doubt about it. I know from his lips, that when that person soon afterwards died, he suspected Lady Dedlock of visiting his wretched lodging, and his wretched grave alone, and in secret. I know from my own inquiries, and through my eyes and ears, that Lady Dedlock did make such visit, in the dress of her own maid; for the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn employed me to reckon up her Ladyship — if you’ll excuse my making use of the term we commonly employ — and I reckoned her up, so far, com-

pletely. I confronted the maid, in the chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, with a witness who had been Lady Dedlock's guide; and there couldn't be the shadow of a doubt that she had worn the young woman's dress, unknown to her. Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, I did endeavor to pave the way a little towards these unpleasant disclosures, yesterday, by saying that very strange things happened even in high families sometimes. All this, and more, has happened in your own family, and to and through your own Lady. It is my belief that the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn followed up these inquiries to the hour of his death; and that he and Lady Dedlock even had bad blood between them upon the matter that very night. Now, only you put that to Lady Dedlock, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet; and ask her Ladyship whether, even after he had left here, she didn't go down to his chambers with the intention of saying something further to him, dressed in a loose black mantle with a deep fringe to it."

Sir Leicester sits like a statue, gazing at the cruel finger that is probing the life-blood of his heart.

"You put that to her Ladyship, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, from me, Inspector Bucket of the Detective. And if her Ladyship makes any difficulty about admitting of it, you tell her that it's

no use; that Inspector Bucket knows it, and knows that she passed the soldier as you called him (though he's not in the army now), and knows that she knows she passed him, on the staircase. Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, why do I relate all this? "

Sir Leicester, who has covered his face with his hands, uttering a single groan, requests him to pause for a moment. By-and-by he takes his hands away; and so preserves his dignity and outward calmness, though there is no more color in his face than in his white hair, that Mr. Bucket is a little awed by him. Something frozen and fixed is upon his manner, over and above its usual shell of haughtiness; and Mr. Bucket soon detects an unusual slowness in his speech, with now and then a curious trouble in beginning, which occasions him to utter inarticulate sounds. With such sounds, he now breaks silence; soon, however, controlling himself to say, that he does not comprehend why a gentleman so faithful and zealous as the late Mr. Tulkinghorn should have communicated to him nothing of this painful, this distressing, this unlooked-for, this overwhelming, this incredible intelligence.

"Again, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," returns Mr. Bucket, "put it to her Ladyship to clear that up. Put it to her Ladyship, if you think it right, from Inspector Bucket of the Detective. You'll



find, or I'm much mistaken, that the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn had the intention of communicating the whole to you, as soon as he considered it ripe; and further, that he had given her Ladyship so to understand. Why, he might have been going to reveal it the very morning when I examined the body! You don't know what I'm going to say and do, five minutes from this present time, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet; and supposing I was to be picked off now, you might wonder why I hadn't done it, don't you see? "

Sir Leicester seems to wake, though his eyes have been wide open; and he looks intently at Mr. Bucket, as Mr. Bucket refers to his watch.

"The party to be apprehended is now in this house," proceeds Mr. Bucket, putting up his watch with a steady hand, and with rising spirits, "and I'm about to take her into custody in your presence. Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, don't you say a word, nor yet stir. There'll be no noise, and no disturbance at all. I'll come back in the course of the evening, if agreeable to you, and endeavor to meet your wishes respecting this unfortunate family matter, and the nobbiest way of keeping it quiet. Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, don't you be nervous on account of the apprehension at present coming off. You shall see the whole case clear, from first to last."

Mr. Bucket rings, goes to the door, briefly whis-

pers Mercury, shuts the door, and stands behind it with his arms folded. After a suspense of a minute or two, the door slowly opens, and a Frenchwoman enters. Mademoiselle Hortense.

The moment she is in the room, Mr. Bucket claps the door to, and puts his back up against it. The suddenness of the noise occasions her to turn; and then, for the first time she sees Sir Leicester Dedlock in his chair.

"I ask you pardon," she mutters hurriedly. "They tell me there was no one here."

Her step towards the door brings her front to front with Mr. Bucket. Suddenly a spasm shoots across her face, and she turns deadly pale.

"This is my lodger, Sir Leicester Dedlock," says Mr. Bucket, nodding at her. "This foreign young woman has been my lodger for some weeks back."

"What do Sir Leicester care for that, you think, my angel?" returns Mademoiselle, in a jocular strain.

"Why, my angel," returns Mr. Bucket, "we shall see."

Mademoiselle Hortense eyes him with a scowl upon her tight face, which generally changes into a smile of scorn. "You are very mysterieuse. Are you drunk?"

"Tolerable sober, my angel," returns Mr. Bucket.

"I come from arriving at this so detestable house with your wife. Your wife have left me since some minutes. They tell me downstairs that your wife is here. I come here, and your wife is not here. What is the intention of this fool's play, say then?" Mademoiselle demands, with her arms composedly crossed, but with something in her dark cheek beating like a clock.

Mr. Bucket merely shakes the finger at her.

"Ah, my God, you are an unhappy idiot!" cries Mademoiselle, with a toss of her head and a laugh. — "Leave me to pass downstairs, great pig." With a stamp of her foot, and a menace.

"Now, Mademoiselle," says Mr. Bucket, in a cool determined way, "you go and sit down upon that sofy."

"I will not sit down upon nothing," she replies, with a shower of nods.

"Now, Mademoiselle," repeats Mr. Bucket, making no demonstration, except with the finger, "you sit down upon that sofy."

"Why?"

"Because I take you into custody on the charge of murder, and you don't need to be told it. Now, I want to be polite to one of your sex and a foreigner, if I can. If I can't I must be rough; and there's rougher ones outside. What I am to be depends on you. So I recommend you, as a friend,

afore another half a blessed moment has passed over your head, to go and sit down upon the sofy."

Mademoiselle complies, saying in a concentrated voice, while that something in her cheek beats fast and hard, "You are a Devil."

"Now, you see," Mr. Bucket proceeds approvingly, "you're more comfortable, and conducting yourself as I should expect a foreign young woman of your sense to do. So I'll give you a piece of advice, and it's this, Don't you talk too much. You're not expected to say anything here, and you can't keep too quiet a tongue in your head. In short, the less you Parlay, the better, you know." Mr. Bucket is very complacent over this French explanation.

Mademoiselle, with that tigerish expansion of the mouth, and her black eyes darting fire upon him, sits upright on the sofa in a rigid state, with her hands clenched — and her feet too, one might suppose — muttering, "O, you Bucket, you are a Devil! "

"Now, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet," says Mr. Bucket, and from this time forth the finger never rests, "this young woman, my lodger, was her Ladyship's maid at the time I have mentioned to you; and this young woman, besides being extraordinary vehement and passionate against her Ladyship after being discharged —— "



“Lie!” cries Mademoiselle. “I discharged myself.”

“Now, why don’t you take my advice?” returns Mr. Bucket, in an impressive, almost in an imploring tone. “I’m surprised at the indiscreetness you commit. You’ll say something that’ll be used against you, you know. You’re sure to come to it. Never you mind what I say till it’s given in evidence. It is not addressed to you.”

“Discharge, too!” cries Mademoiselle, furiously, “by her Ladyship! Eh, my faith, a pretty Ladyship! Why, I r-r-r-ruin my character by remaining with a Ladyship so infame!”

“Upon my soul I wonder at you!” Mr. Bucket remonstrates. “I thought the French were a polite nation, I did, really. Yet to hear a female going on like that, before Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet!”

“He is a poor abused!” cries Mademoiselle. “I spit upon his house, upon his name, upon his imbecility,” all of which she makes the carpet represent. “Oh, that he is a great man! O yes, superb! O Heaven! Bah!”

“Well, Sir Leicester Dedlock,” proceeds Mr. Bucket, “this intemperate foreigner also angrily took it into her head that she established a claim upon Mr. Tulkinghorn deceased, by attending on the occasion I told you of, at his chambers; though

she was liberally paid for her time and trouble."

"Lie!" cries Mademoiselle. "I ref-use his money altogezzer."

("If you *will* Parlay, you know," says Mr. Bucket, parenthetically, "you must take the consequences.) Now, whether she became my lodger, Sir Leicester Dedlock, with any deliberate intention then of doing this deed and blinding me, I give no opinion on; but she lived in my house, in that capacity, at the time that she was hovering about the chambers of the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn with a view to a wrangle, and likewise persecuting and half frightening the life out of an unfortunate stationer."

"Lie!" cries Mademoiselle. "All lie!"

"The murder was committed, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, and you know under what circumstances. Now, I beg of you to follow me close with your attention for a minute or two. I was sent for, and the case was intrusted to me. I examined the place, and the body, and the papers, and everything. From information I received (from a clerk in the same house) I took George the soldier into custody, as having been seen hanging about there, on the night, and at very nigh the time, of the murder, also, as having been overheard in high words with the deceased on former occasions—even threatening him, as the

witness made out. If you ask me, Sir Leicester Dedlock, whether from the first I believed George to be the murderer, I tell you candidly No; but he might be, notwithstanding; and there was enough against him to make it my duty to take him, and get him kept under remand. Now observe! ”

As Mr. Bucket bends forward in some excitement — for him — and inaugurates what he is going to say with one ghostly beat of his forefinger in the air, Mademoiselle Hortense fixes her black eyes upon him with a dark frown, and sets her dry lips closely and firmly together.

“ I went home, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, at night, and found this young woman having supper with my wife, Mrs. Bucket. She had made a mighty show of being fond of Mrs. Bucket from her first offering herself as our lodger, but that night she made more than ever — in fact, overdid it. Likewise, she overdid her respect, and all that, for the lamented memory of the deceased Mr. Tulk- inghorn. By the living Lord, it flashed upon me, as I sat opposite to her at the table and saw her with a knife in her hand, that she had done it! ”

Mademoiselle is hardly audible, in straining through her teeth and lips the words “ You are a Devil.”

“ Now where,” pursues Mr. Bucket, “ had she been on the the night of the murder? She had

been to the theayter. (She really was there, I have since found, both before the deed and after it.) I knew I had an artful customer to deal with, and that proof would be very difficult; and I laid a trap for her — such a trap as I never laid yet, and such a venture as I never made yet. I worked it out in my mind while I was talking to her at supper. When I went upstairs to bed, our house being small and this young woman's ears sharp, I stuffed the sheet into Mrs. Bucket's mouth that she shouldn't say a word of surprise, and told her all about it. — My dear, don't you give your mind to that again, or I shall link your feet together at the ankles." Mr. Bucket, breaking off has made a noiseless descent upon Mademoiselle, and laid his heavy hand upon her shoulder.

"What is the matter with you now?" she asked him.

"Don't you think any more," returns Mr. Bucket, with admonitory finger, "of throwing yourself out of the window. That's what's the matter with me. Come! Just take my arm. You needn't get up; I'll sit down by you. Now take my arm, will you? I'm a married man, you know; you're acquainted with my wife. Just take my arm."

Vainly endeavoring to moisten those dry lips, with a painful sound, she struggles with herself and complies.



“Now we’re all right again. Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, this case could never have been the case it is, but for Mrs. Bucket, who is a woman in fifty thousand—in a hundred and fifty thousand! To throw this young woman off her guard, I have never set foot in our house since; though I’ve communicated with Mrs. Bucket, in the baker’s loaves and in the milk, as often as required. My whispered words to Mrs. Bucket, when she had the sheet in her mouth, were, ‘My dear, can you throw her off continually with natural accounts of my suspicions against George, and this, and that, and t’other? Can you do without rest, and keep watch upon her, night and day? Can you undertake to say, She shall do nothing without my knowledge, she shall be my prisoner without suspecting it, she shall no more escape from me than from death, and her life shall be my life, and her soul my soul, till I have got her, if she did this murder?’ Mrs. Bucket says to me, as well as she could speak, on account of the sheet, ‘Bucket, I can!’ And she has acted up to it glorious!”

“Lies!” Mademoiselle interposes. “All lies, my friend!”

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, how did my calculations come out under these circumstances? When I calculated that this impetuous young woman would overdo it in new directions, was I

wrong or right? I was right. What does she try to do? Don't let it give you a turn. To throw the murder on her Ladyship."

Sir Leicester rises from his chair, and staggers down again.

"And she got encouragement in it from hearing that I was always here, which was done a' purpose. Now, open that pocket-book of mine, Sir Leicester Dedlock, if I may take the liberty of throwing it towards you, and look at the letters sent to me, each with the two words, *LADY DEDLOCK*, in it. Open the one directed to yourself, which I stopped this very morning, and read the three words, *LADY DEDLOCK, MURDERESS*, in it. These letters have been falling about like a shower of lady-birds. What do you say now to Mrs. Bucket, from her spy-place, having seen them all written by this young woman? What do you say to Mrs. Bucket having, within this half-hour, secured the corresponding ink and paper, fellow half-sheets and what not? What do you say to Mrs. Bucket having watched the posting of 'em every one by this young woman, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet?" Mr. Bucket asks, triumphant in his admiration of his lady's genius.

Two things are especially observable, as Mr. Bucket proceeds to a conclusion. First, that he seems imperceptibly to establish a dreadful right

of property in Mademoiselle. Secondly, that the very atmosphere she breathes seems to narrow and contract about her, as if a close net, or a pall, were being drawn nearer and yet nearer around her breathless figure.

“There is no doubt that her Ladyship was on the spot at the eventful period,” says Mr. Bucket; “and my foreign friend here saw her, I believe, from the upper part of the staircase. Her Ladyship and George and my foreign friend were all pretty close on one another’s heels. But that don’t signify any more, so I’ll not go into it. I found the wadding of the pistol with which the deceased Mr. Tulkinghorn was shot. It was a bit of the printed description of your house at Chesney Wold. Not much in that, you’ll say, Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet. No. But when my foreign friend here is so thoroughly off her guard as to think it a safe time to tear up the rest of that leaf, and when Mrs. Bucket puts the pieces together and finds the wadding wanting, it begins to look like Queer Street.”

“These are very long lies,” Mademoiselle interposes. “You prose great deal. Is it that you have almost all finished, or are you speaking always?”

“Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet,” proceeds Mr. Bucket, who delights in a full title, and does vio-

lence to himself when he dispenses with any fragment of it, "the last point in the case which I am now going to mention, shows the necessity of patience in our business, and never doing a thing in a hurry. I watched this young woman yesterday, without her knowledge, when she was looking at the funeral, in company with my wife, who planned to take her there; and I had so much to convict her, and I saw such an expression in her face, and my mind so rose against her malice towards her Ladyship, and the time was altogether such a time for bringing down what you may call retribution upon her, that if I had been a younger hand with less experience, I should have taken her, certain. Equally, last night, when her Ladyship, as is so universally admired I am sure, come home, looking — why, Lord! a man might almost say like Venus rising from the ocean, it was so unpleasant and inconsistent to think of her being charged with a murder of which she was innocent, that I felt quite to want to put an end to this job. What should I have lost? Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, I should have lost the weapon. My prisoner here proposed to Mrs. Bucket, after the departure of the funeral, that they should go, per bus, a little ways into the country, and take tea at a very decent house of entertainment. Now, near that house of entertainment there's a piece of



water. At tea, my prisoner got up to fetch her pocket-handkercher from the bedroom where the bonnets was; she was rather a long time gone, and came back a little out of wind. As soon as they came home this was reported to me by Mrs. Bucket, along with her observations and suspicions. I had the piece of water dragged by moonlight, in presence of a couple of our men, and the pocket-pistol was brought up before it had been there a half a dozen hours. Now, my dear, put your arm a little further through mine, and hold it steady, and I shan't hurt you! "

In a trice Mr. Bucket snaps a handcuff on her wrist. "That's one," says Mr. Bucket. "Now the other, darling. Two, and all told! "

He rises; she rises too. "Where," she asks him, darkening her large eyes until their drooping lids almost conceal them — and yet they stare, "where is your false, your treacherous and cursed wife? "

"She's gone forard to the Police Office," returns Mr. Bucket. "You'll see her there, my dear."

"I would like to kiss her! " exclaims Made-moiselle Hortense, panting tigress-like.

"You'd bite her, I suspect," says Mr. Bucket.

"I would! " making her eyes very large. "I would love to tear her, limb from limb."

"Bless you, darling," says Mr. Bucket, with the

greatest composure; "I am fully prepared to hear that. Your sex have such a surprising animosity against one another, when you do differ. You don't mind me half so much, do you?"

"No. Though you are a devil still."

"Angel and devil by turns, eh?" cries Mr. Bucket. "But I am in my regular employment, you must consider. Let me put your shawl tidy. I've been lady's maid to a good many before now. Anything wanting to the bonnet? There's a cab at the door."

Mademoiselle Hortense, casting an indignant eye at the glass, shakes herself perfectly neat in one shake, and looks, to do her justice, uncommonly genteel.

"Listen then, my angel," says she, after several sarcastic nods: "You are very spiritual. But can you restore him back to life?"

Mr. Bucket answers, "Not exactly."

"That is droll. Listen yet one time. You are very spiritual. Can you make an honorable lady of Her?"

"Don't be so malicious," says Mr. Bucket.

"Or a haughty gentleman of *Him*?" cries Mademoiselle, referring to Sir Leicester with ineffable disdain. "Eh! O then regard him! The poor infant! Ha! ha! ha!"

“Come, come, why, this is worse parlaying than the other,” says Mr. Bucket. “Come along!”

“You cannot do these things? Then you can do as you please with me. It is but the death, it is all the same. Let us go, my angel. Adieu you old man, gray. I pity you, and I des-pise you!”

With these last words, she snaps her teeth together, as if her mouth closed with a spring. It is impossible to describe how Mr. Bucket gets her out, but he accomplishes that feat in a manner so peculiar to himself; enfolding and pervading her like a cloud, and hovering away with her as if he were a homely Jupiter, and she the object of his affections.

Sir Leicester, left alone, remains in the same attitude, as though he were still listening, and his attention were still occupied. At length he gazes round the empty room, and finding it deserted, rises unsteadily to his feet, pushes back his chair, and walks a few steps, supporting himself by the table. Then he stops; and, with more of those inarticulate sounds, lifts up his eyes and seems to stare at something.

Heaven knows what he sees. The green, green woods of Chesney Wold, the noble house, the pictures of his forefathers, strangers defacing them, officers of police coarsely handling his

most precious heirlooms, thousands of fingers pointing at him, thousands of faces sneering at him. But if such shadows flit before him to his bewilderment, there is one other shadow which he can name with something like distinctness even yet, and to which alone he addresses his tearing of his white hair, and his extended arms.

It is she, in association with whom, saving that she has been for years a main fiber of the root of his dignity and pride, he has never had a selfish thought. It is she whom he has loved, admired, honored, and set up for the world to respect. It is she, who, at the core of all the constrained formalities and conventionalities of his life, has been a stock of living tenderness and love, susceptible as nothing else is of being struck with the agony he feels. He sees her, almost to the exclusion of himself; and cannot bear to look upon her cast down from the high place she has graced so well.

And, even to the point of his sinking on the ground oblivious of his suffering, he can yet pronounce her name with something like distinctness in the midst of those intrusive sounds, and in a tone of mourning and compassion rather than reproach.



*Sergeant Cuff*

WILKIE COLLINS

*THE complete reorganization of the London Police Force under Sir Robert Peel was effected early in the thirties. Hence the term "peelers" which has been in common use on both sides of the Atlantic ever since. From this period dates the first-rate English detective, examples of whom have been preserved for posterity in the pages of Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Unique personalities of the heroic type these men were,—the originals well-known to their fictive creators. Inspector Field who appears as "Inspector Bucket" in "Bleak House" was a close personal friend of Charles Dickens who delighted in a night-ramble with him. "Sergeant Cuff," although we have no positive evidence, was undoubtedly quite as well-known to Wilkie Collins. He is unquestionably a first-hand portrait carefully studied from life—a unique, and strikingly original figure in the gallery of great detectives. The present story, condensed from "The Moonstone," introduces him the day after the great stone had been stolen from Miss Rachel Verinder to whom its original English possessor—her uncle—had bequeathed it at her aunt's country-place in Yorkshire.*

*On the afternoon of the previous day three Indians attired as strolling jugglers had appeared on the lawn and asked leave to give their entertainment.*

*As the sequel proves, these were the successors of the trio from whom Colonel Herncastle had ravished the diamond, and who had followed it to England. Sergeant Cuff of the Metropolitan Police Force is called in to unravel the mystery which he finally does in masterly style.*





# *Sergeant Cuff*

FROM "THE MOONSTONE."

WILKIE COLLINS

THE STORMING OF SERINGAPATAM (1799):

*(Extracted from a Family Paper.)*

## I.

I address these lines — written in India — to my relatives in England.

My object is to explain the motive which has induced me to refuse the right hand of friendship to my cousin, John Herncastle. The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. And I declare, on my word of honor, that what I am now about to write is, strictly and literally, the truth.

The private difference between my cousin and me took its rise in a great public event in which we

were both concerned — the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799.

In order that the circumstances may be clearly understood, I must revert for a moment to the period before the assault, and to the stories current in our camp of the treasure in jewels and gold stored up in the Palace of Seringapatam.

## II.

One of the wildest of these stories related to a Yellow Diamond — a famous gem in the native annals of India.

The earliest known traditions describe the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the moon. Partly from its peculiar color, partly from a superstition which represented it as partaking of the nature of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in luster with the waxing and waning of the moon, it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this day — the name of *THE MOONSTONE*. A similar superstition was once prevalent, as I have heard, in ancient Greece and Rome; not applying, however (as in India), to a diamond devoted to the service of a

god, but to a semi-transparent stone of the inferior order of gems, supposed to be affected by the lunar influences — the moon, in this latter case also, giving the name by which the stone is still known to collectors in our own time.

The adventures of the Yellow Diamond begin with the eleventh century of the Christian era.

At that date the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni, crossed India; seized on the holy city of Somnauth; and stripped of its treasures the famous temple which had stood for centuries — the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the eastern world.

Of all the deities worshipped in the temple, the moon-god alone escaped the rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans. Preserved by three Brahmins, the inviolate deity, bearing the Yellow Diamond in its forehead, was removed by night, and was transported to the second of the sacred cities of India — the city of Benares.

Here, in a new shrine — in a hall inlaid with precious stones, under a roof supported by pillars of gold — the moon-god was set up and worshipped. Here, on the night when the shrine was completed, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmins in a dream.

The deity breathed the breath of his divinity on the Diamond in the forehead of the god. And the

Brahmins knelt and hid their faces in their robes. The deity commanded that the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men. And the Brahmins heard and bowed before his will. The deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him. And the Brahmins caused the prophecy to be written over the gates of the shrine in letters of gold.

One age followed another — and still, generation after generation, the successors of the three Brahmins watched their priceless Moonstone, night and day. One age followed another, until the first years of the eighteenth Christian century saw the reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls. At his command havoc and rapine were let loose once more among the temples of the worship of Brahma. The shrine of the four-handed god was polluted by the slaughter of sacred animals; the images of the deities were broken in pieces, and the Moonstone was seized by an officer of rank in the army of the Aurungzebe.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by open force, the three guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the



sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still, through all chances and changes, the successors of the three guardian priests kept their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem. Time rolled on from the first to the last years of the eighteenth Christian century. The diamond fell into the possession of Tippoo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armory. Even then — in the palace of the Sultan himself — the three guardian priests still watched in secret. There were three officers of Tippoo's household, strangers to the rest, who had won their master's confidence by conforming, or appearing to conform, to the Mussulman faith; and to those three men report pointed as the three priests in disguise.

### III.

So, as told in our camp, ran the fanciful story of the Moonstone. It made no serious impression on any of us except my cousin — whose love of the marvelous induced him to believe it. On the night

before the assault on Seringapatam he was absurdly angry with me and with others, for treating the whole thing as a fable. A foolish wrangle followed; and Herncastle's unlucky temper got the better of him. He declared, in his boastful way, that we should see the Diamond on his finger if the English army took Seringapatam. The sally was saluted by a roar of laughter, and there, as we all thought that night, the thing ended.

Let me now take you on to the day of the assault.

My cousin and I were separated at the outset. I never saw him when we forded the river; when we planted the English flag in the first breach; when we crossed the ditch beyond; and, fighting every inch of our way, entered the town. It was only at dusk, when the place was ours, and after General Baird himself had found the dead body of Tippoo under a heap of the slain, that Herncastle and I met.

We were each attached to a party sent out by the general's orders to prevent the plunder and confusion which followed our conquest. The camp-followers committed deplorable excesses; and, worse still, the soldiers found their way, by an unguarded door, into the treasury of the Palace, and loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met to enforce the laws of discipline on our own soldiers. Herncastle's fiery temper had

been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through which we had passed. He was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been intrusted to him.

There was riot and confusion enough in the treasury, but no violence that I saw. The men (if I may use such an expression) disgraced themselves good-humoredly. All sorts of rough jests and catch-words were bandied about among them; and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly, in the form of a mischievous joke. "Who's got the Moonstone?" was the rallying cry which perpetually caused the plundering as soon as it was stopped in one place to break out in another. While I was still vainly trying to establish order I heard a frightful yelling on the other side of the courtyard, and at once ran toward the cries, in dread of finding some new outbreak of the pillage in that direction.

I got to an open door, and saw the bodies of two Indians (by their dress, as I guessed, officers of the palace) lying across the entrance, dead.

A cry inside hurried me into a room, which appeared to serve as an armory. A third Indian, mortally wounded, was sinking at the feet of a man whose back was toward me. The man turned at the instant when I came in, and I saw John Herncastle, with a torch in one hand and a dagger

dripping with blood in the other. A stone, set like a pommel in the end of the dagger's handle, flashed in the torch-light as he turned on me, like a gleam of fire. The dying Indian sank to his knees, pointed to the dagger in Herncastle's hand, and said, in his native language: "The Moonstone will have its vengeance on you and yours!" He spoke those words, and fell dead on the floor.

Before I could stir in the matter the men who had followed me across the courtyard crowded in. My cousin rushed to meet them, like a madman. "Clear the room!" he shouted to me, "and set a guard on the door!" The men fell back as he threw himself on them with his torch and his dagger. I put two sentinels of my own company, on whom I could rely, to keep the door. Through the remainder of the night I saw no more of my cousin.

Early in the morning, the plunder still going on, General Baird announced publicly by beat of drum, that any thief detected in the fact, be he whom he might, should be hung. The provost marshal was in attendance to prove that the general was in earnest; and in the throng that followed the proclamation Herncastle and I met again.

He held out his hand as usual, and said, "Good-morning."



I waited before I gave him my hand in return.

"Tell me first," I said, "how the Indian in the armory met his death, and what those last words meant when he pointed to the dagger in your hand."

"The Indian met his death, as I suppose, by a mortal wound," said Herncastle. "What his last words meant I know no more than you do."

I looked at him narrowly. His frenzy of the previous day had all calmed down. I determined to give him another chance.

"Is that all you have to tell me?" I asked.

He answered, "That is all."

I turned my back on him; and we have not spoken since.

#### IV.

I beg it to be understood that what I write here about my cousin (unless some necessity should arise for making it public) is for the information of the family only. Herncastle has said nothing that can justify me in speaking to our commanding officer. He has been taunted more than once about the Diamond, by those who recollect his angry outbreak before the assault; but, as may easily be imagined, his own remembrance of the circumstances under which I surprised him in the armory



has been enough to keep him silent. It is reported that he means to exchange into another regiment, avowedly for the purpose of separating himself from *me*.

Whether this be true or not, I cannot prevail upon myself to become his accuser — and I think with good reason. If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward. I have not only no proof that he killed the two men at the door, I cannot even declare that he killed the third man inside — for I cannot say that my own eyes saw the deed committed. It is true that I heard the dying Indian's words; but if those words were pronounced to be the ravings of delirium, how could I contradict the assertion from my own knowledge? Let our relatives, on either side, form their own opinion on what I have written, and decide for themselves whether the aversion I now feel toward this man is well or ill founded.

Although I attach no sort of credit to the fantastic Indian legend of the gem, I must acknowledge, before I conclude, that I am influenced by a certain superstition of my own in this matter. It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality with it. I am not only persuaded of Herncastle's guilt; I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will

live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Breakfast had not been over long when a telegram from Mr. Blake, the elder, arrived in answer to his son. It informed us that he had laid hands (by help of his friend the Commissioner) on the right man to help us. The name of him was Sergeant Cuff, and the arrival of him from London might be expected by the morning train.

At reading the name of the new police-officer Mr. Franklin gave a start. It seems that he had heard some curious anecdotes about Sergeant Cuff from his father's lawyer during his stay in London. "I begin to hope we are seeing the end of our anxieties already," he said. "If half the stories I have heard are true, when it comes to unraveling a mystery there isn't the equal in England of Sergeant Cuff!"

We all got excited and impatient as the time drew near for the appearance of this renowned and capable character. Superintendent Seegrave\* returning to us at his appointed time, and hearing that the Sergeant was expected, instantly shut himself up in a room, with pen, ink, and paper, to

\* The Police official who was first called in.

make notes of the Report which would be certainly expected from him.

When the time came for the Sergeant's arrival I went down to the gate to look out for him.

A fly from the railway drove up as I reached the lodge; and out got a grizzled, elderly man, so miserably lean that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of him. He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat round his neck. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes of a steely light gray, had a very disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more of you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft; his voice was melancholy; his long lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson, or an undertaker, or anything else you like, except what he really was. A more complete opposite to Superintendent Seegrave than Sergeant Cuff, and a less comforting officer to look at for a family in distress, I defy you to discover, search where you may.

"Is this Lady Verinder's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Sergeant Cuff."

"This way, sir, if you please."

On our road to the house I mentioned my name

and position in the family to satisfy him that he might speak to me about the business on which my lady was to employ him. Not a word did he say about the business, however, for all that. He admired the grounds, and remarked that he felt the sea-air very brisk and refreshing. I privately wondered, on my side, how the celebrated Cuff had got his reputation. We reached the house, in the temper of two strange dogs, coupled up together for the first time in their lives by the same chain.

Asking for my lady, and hearing that she was in one of the conservatories, we went round to the gardens at the back and sent a servant to seek her. While we were waiting Sergeant Cuff looked through the evergreen arch on our left, spied out our rosary, and walked straight in, with the first appearance of anything like interest that he had shown yet. To the gardener's astonishment, and to my disgust, this celebrated policeman proved to be quite a mine of learning on the trumpery subject of rose-gardens.

"Ah, you've got the right exposure here to the south and sou'west," says the Sergeant, with a wag of his grizzled head, and a streak of pleasure in his melancholy voice. "This is the shape for a rosary — nothing like a circle set in a square. Yes, yes; with walks between all the beds. But



they oughtn't to be gravel-walks like these. Grass, Mr. Gardener — grass-walks between your roses; gravel's too hard for them. That's a sweet pretty bed of white roses and blush roses. They always mix well together, don't they? Here's the white musk-rose, Mr. Betteredge — our old English rose holding up its head along with the best and the newest of them. Pretty dear!" says the Sergeant, fondling the musk-rose with his lanky fingers, and speaking to it as if he was speaking to a child.

This was a nice sort of man to recover Miss Rachel's Diamond, and to find out the thief who stole it!

"You seem to be fond of roses, Sergeant?" I remarked.

"I haven't much time to be fond of anything," says Sergeant Cuff. "But, when I *have* a moment's fondness to bestow, most times, Mr. Betteredge, the roses get it. I began my life among them in my father's nursery garden, and I shall end my life among them if I can. Yes. One of these days (please God) I shall retire from catching thieves, and try my hand at growing roses. There will be grass-walks, Mr. Gardener, between my beds," says the Sergeant, on whose mind the gravel-path of a rosary seemed to dwell unpleasantly.

"It seems an odd taste, sir," I ventured to say, "for a man in your line of life."



“If you will look about you (which most people won’t do),” says Sergeant Cuff, “you will see that the nature of a man’s tastes is, most times, as opposite as possible to the nature of a man’s business. Show me any two things more opposite one from the other than a rose and a thief, and I’ll correct my tastes accordingly — if it isn’t too late at my time of life. You find the damask rose a goodish stock for most of the tender sorts, don’t you, Mr. Gardener? Ah! I thought so. Here’s a lady coming. Is it Lady Verinder?”

He had seen her before either I or the gardener had seen her — though we knew which way to look, and he didn’t. I began to think him rather a quicker man than he appeared to be at first sight.

The Sergeant’s appearance, or the Sergeant’s errand — one or both — seemed to cause my lady some little embarrassment. She was, for the first time in all my experience of her, at a loss what to say at an interview with a stranger. Sergeant Cuff put her at her ease directly. He asked if any other person had been employed about the robbery before we sent for him; and hearing that another person had been called in, and was now in the house, begged leave to speak to him before anything else was done.

My lady led the way back. Before he followed

her, the Sergeant relieved his mind on the subject of the gravel-walks by a parting word to the gardener. "Get her ladyship to try grass," he said, with a sour look at the paths. "No gravel! no gravel! "

Why Superintendent Seegrave should have appeared to be several sizes smaller than life, on being presented to Sergeant Cuff, I can't undertake to explain. I can only state the fact. They retired together, and remained a weary long time shut up from all mortal intrusion. When they came out Mr. Superintendent was excited and Mr. Sergeant was yawning.

"The Sergeant wishes to see Miss Verinder's sitting-room," says Mr. Seegrave, addressing me with great pomp and eagerness. "The Sergeant may have some questions to ask. Attend the Sergeant, if you please! "

While I was being ordered about in this way, I looked at the great Cuff. The great Cuff, on his side, looked at Superintendent Seegrave in that quietly expecting way which I have already noticed. I can't affirm that he was on the watch for his brother-officer's speedy appearance in the character of an Ass — I can only say that I strongly suspected it.

I led the way up-stairs. The Sergeant went softly all over the Indian cabinet and all round the

"boudoir," asking questions (occasionally only of Mr. Superintendent, and continually of me), the drift of which I believe to have been equally unintelligible to both of us. In due time his course brought him to the door, and put him face to face with the decorative painting that you know of. He laid one lean inquiring finger on the small smear, just under the lock, which Superintendent Seegrave had already noticed, when he reproved the women-servants for all crowding together into the room.

"That's a pity," says Sergeant Cuff. "How did it happen?"

He put the question to me. I answered that the women-servants had crowded into the room on the previous morning, and that some of their petticoats had done the mischief. "Superintendent Seegrave ordered them out, sir," I added, "before they did any more harm."

"Right!" says Mr. Superintendent, in his military way. "I ordered them out. The petticoats did it, Sergeant — the petticoats did it."

"Did you notice which petticoat did it?" asked Sergeant Cuff, still addressing himself, not to his brother-officer, but to me.

"No, sir."

He turned to Superintendent Seegrave upon that, and said, "*You* noticed, I suppose?"

Mr. Superintendent looked a little taken aback;

but he made the best of it. "I can't charge my memory, Sergeant," he said, "a mere trifle — a mere trifle."

Sergeant Cuff looked at Mr. Seegrave as he had looked at the gravel-walks in the rosary, and gave us, in his melancholy way, the first taste of his quality which we had had yet.

"I made a private inquiry last week, Mr. Superintendent," he said. "At one end of the inquiry there was a murder, and at the other end there was a spot of ink on a table-cloth that nobody could account for. In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world I have never met with such a thing as a trifle yet. Before we go a step further in this business, we must see the petticoat that made the smear, and we must know for certain when that paint was wet."

Mr. Superintendent — taking his set-down rather sulkily — asked if he should summon the women. Sergeant Cuff, after considering a minute, sighed, and shook his head.

"No," he said, "we'll take the matter of the paint first. It's a question of Yes or No with the paint — which is short. It's a question of petticoats with the woman — which is long. What o'clock was it when the servants were in this room yesterday morning? Eleven o'clock — eh? Is



there anybody in the house who knows whether that paint was wet or dry, at eleven yesterday morning? ”

“ Her ladyship’s nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, knows,” I said.

“ Is the gentleman in the house? ”

Mr. Franklin was as close at hand as could be — waiting for his first chance of being introduced to the great Cuff. In half a minute he was in the room, and was giving his evidence as follows:

“ That door, Sergeant,” he said, “ has been painted by Miss Verinder, under my inspection, with my help, and in a vehicle of my own composition. The vehicle dries whatever colors may be used with it in twelve hours.”

“ Do you remember when the smeared bit was done, sir? ” asked the Sergeant.

“ Perfectly,” answered Mr. Franklin. “ That was the last morsel of the door to be finished. We wanted to get it done on Wednesday last, and I myself completed it by three in the afternoon, or soon after.”

“ To-day is Friday,” said Sergeant Cuff, addressing himself to Superintendent Seegrave. “ Let us reckon back, sir. At three on the Wednesday afternoon, that bit of the painting was completed. The vehicle dried it in twelve hours — that is to say,



dried it by three o'clock on Thursday morning. At eleven on Thursday morning you held your inquiry here. Take three from eleven, and eight remains. That paint had been *eight hours dry*, Mr. Superintendent, when you supposed that the women-servants' petticoats smeared it."

First knock-down blow for Mr. Seegrave! If he had not suspected poor Penelope, I should have pitied him.

Having settled the question of the paint, Sergeant Cuff, from the moment, gave his brother-officer up as a bad job — and addressed himself to Mr. Franklin, as the more promising assistant of the two.

"It's quite on the cards, sir," he said, "that you have put the clew into our hands."

As the words passed his lips the bedroom door opened and Miss Rachel came out among us suddenly.

She addressed herself to the Sergeant, without appearing to notice (or to heed) that he was a perfect stranger to her.

"Did you say," she asked, pointing to Mr. Franklin, "that *he* had put the clew into your hands? "

("This is Miss Verinder," I whispered, behind the Sergeant.)

"That gentleman, miss," says the Sergeant —

with his steely-gray eyes carefully studying my young lady's face — "has possibly put the clew in our hands."

She turned for one moment, and tried to look at Mr. Franklin. I say tried, for she suddenly looked away again before their eyes met. There seemed to be some strange disturbance in her mind. She colored up, and then she turned pale again. With the paleness there came a new look into her face, a look which it startled me to see.

"Having answered your question, miss," says the Sergeant, "I beg leave to make an inquiry in my turn. There is a smear on the painting of your door here. Do you happen to know when it was done? or who did it? "

Instead of making any reply, Miss Rachel went on with her question as if he had not spoken, or as if she had not heard him.

"Are you another police officer?" she asked.

"I am Sergeant Cuff, miss, of the detective police."

"Do you think a young lady's advice worth having? "

"I shall be glad to hear it, miss."

"Do your duty by yourself — and don't allow Mr. Franklin Blake to help you! "

She said those words so spitefully, so savagely, with such an extraordinary outbreak of ill-will

toward Mr. Franklin, in her voice and her look, that — although I had known her from a baby, though I loved and honored her next to my lady herself — I was ashamed of Miss Rachel for the first time in my life.

Sergeant Cuff's immovable eyes never stirred from off her face. "Thank you, miss," he said. "Do you happen to know anything about the smear? Might you have done it by accident yourself?"

"I know nothing about the smear."

With that answer she turned away, and shut herself up again in her bedroom. This time I heard her — as Penelope had heard her before — burst out crying as soon as she was alone again.

I couldn't bring myself to look at the Sergeant — I looked at Mr. Franklin, who stood nearest to me. He seemed to be even more sorely distressed at what had passed than I was.

"I told you I was uneasy about her," he said. "And now you see why."

"Miss Verinder appears to be a little out of temper about the loss of her Diamond," remarked the Sergeant. "It's a valuable jewel. Natural enough! natural enough!"

Here was the excuse that I had made for her (when she forgot herself before Superintendent Seegrave, on the previous day) being made for

her over again, by a man who couldn't have had *my* interest in making it — for he was a perfect stranger! A kind of cold shudder ran through me, which I couldn't account for at the time. I know now that I must have got my first suspicion, at that moment, of a new light (and a horrid light) having suddenly fallen on the case, in the mind of Sergeant Cuff — purely and entirely in consequence of what he had seen in Miss Rachel, and heard from Miss Rachel, at that first interview between them.

“A young lady's tongue is a privileged member, sir,” says the Sergeant to Mr. Franklin. “Let us forget what has passed, and go straight on with this business. Thanks to you, we know when the paint was dry. The next thing to discover is when the paint was last seen without that smear. *You* have got a head on your shoulders — and you understand what I mean.”

Mr. Franklin composed himself, and came back with an effort from Miss Rachel to the matter in hand.

“I think I do understand,” he said. “The more we narrow the question of time the more we also narrow the field of inquiry.”

“That's it, sir,” said the Sergeant. “Did you notice your work here on the Wednesday afternoon, after you had done it?”

Mr. Franklin shook his head and answered, "I can't say I did."

"Did *you*?" inquired Sergeant Cuff, turning to me.

"I can't say I did either, sir."

"Who was the last person in the room, the last thing on Wednesday night?"

"Miss Rachel, I suppose, sir."

Mr. Franklin struck in there, "Or possibly your daughter, Betteredge." He turned to Sergeant Cuff, and explained that my daughter was Miss Verinder's maid.

"Mr. Betteredge, ask your daughter to step up. Stop!" says the Sergeant, taking me away to the window out of ear-shot. "Your Superintendent here," he went on, in a whisper, "has made a pretty full report to me of the manner in which he has managed this case. Among other things he has, by his own confession, set the servants' backs up. It's very important to smooth them down again. Tell your daughter, and tell the rest of them, these two things with my compliments: First, that I have no evidence before me, yet, that the Diamond has been stolen; I only know that the Diamond has been lost. Second, that *my* business here with the servants is simply to ask them to lay their heads together and help me to find it."



My experience of the women-servants, when Superintendent Seegrave laid his embargo on their rooms, came in handy here.

"May I make so bold, Sergeant, as to tell the women a third thing?" I asked. "Are they free (with your compliments) to fidget up and down stairs, and whisk in and out of their bedrooms, if the fit takes them?"

"Perfectly free," says the Sergeant.

"*That* will smooth them down, sir," I remarked, "from the cook to the scullion."

"Go and do it at once, Mr. Betteredge."

I did it in less than five minutes. There was only one difficulty when I came to the bit about the bedrooms. It took a pretty stiff exertion of my authority, as chief, to prevent the whole of the female household from following me and Penelope up-stairs, in the character of volunteer witnesses in a burning fever of anxiety to help Sergeant Cuff.

The Sergeant seemed to approve of Penelope. He became a trifle less dreary; and he looked much as he had looked when he noticed the white musk-rose in the flower-garden. Here is my daughter's evidence, as drawn off from her by the Sergeant. She gave it, I think, very prettily — but, there! she is my child all over: nothing of her mother in her; Lord bless you, nothing of her mother in her!

Penelope examined: Took a lively interest in

the painting on the door, having helped to mix the colors. Noticed the bit of work under the lock, because it was the last bit done. Had seen it, some hours afterward, without a smear. Had left it, as late as twelve at night, without a smear. Had, at that hour, wished her young lady good-night in the bedroom; had heard the clock strike in the "boudoir:" had her hand at the time on the handle of the painted door; knew the paint was wet (having helped to mix the colors, as aforesaid); took particular pains not to touch it; could swear that she held up the skirts of her dress, and that there was no smear on the paint then; could *not* swear that her dress mightn't have touched it accidentally in going out; remembered the dress she had on, because it was new, a present from Miss Rachel; her father remembered, and could speak to it, too; could, and would, and did fetch it; dress recognized by her father as the dress she wore that night; skirts examined, a long job from the size of them; not the ghost of a paint-stain discovered anywhere. End of Penelope's evidence — and very pretty and convincing, too. Signed, Gabriel Betteredge.

The Sergeant's next proceeding was to question me about any large dogs in the house who might have got into the room, and done the mischief with a whisk of their tails. Hearing that this was

impossible, he next sent for a magnifying-glass, and tried how the smear looked, seen that way. No skin-mark (as of a human hand) printed off on the paint. All the signs visible — signs which told that the paint had been smeared by some loose article of somebody's dress touching it in going by. That somebody (putting together Penelope's evidence and Mr. Franklin's evidence) must have been in the room, and done the mischief, between midnight and three o'clock on the Thursday morning.

Having brought his investigation to this point, Sergeant Cuff discovered that such a person as Superintendent Seegrave was still left in the room, upon which he summed up the proceedings for his brother-officer's benefit, as follows:

“This trifle of yours, Mr. Superintendent,” says the Sergeant, pointing to the place on the door, “has grown a little in importance since you noticed it last. At the present stage of the inquiry there are, as I take it, three discoveries to make, starting from that smear. Find out (first) whether there is any article of dress in this house with the smear of the paint on it. Find out (second) who that dress belongs to. Find out (third) how the person can account for having been in this room, and smeared the paint, between midnight and three in the morning. If the person can't satisfy you, you

haven't far to look for the hand that has got the Diamond. I'll work this by myself, if you please, and detain you no longer from your regular business in town. You have got one of your men here, I see. Leave him here at my disposal, in case I want him—and allow me to wish you good-morning."

Superintendent Seegrave's respect for the Sergeant was great; but his respect for himself was greater still. Hit hard by the celebrated Cuff, he hit back smartly, to the best of his ability, on leaving the room.

"I have abstained from expressing any opinion so far," says Mr. Superintendent, with his military voice still in good working order. "I have now only one remark to offer, on leaving this case in your hands. There *is* such a thing, Sergeant, as making a mountain out of a mole-hill. Good-morning."

"There is also such a thing as making nothing out of a mole-hill, in consequence of your head being too high to see it." Having returned his brother-officer's compliment in those terms, Sergeant Cuff wheeled about, and walked away to the window by himself.

Mr. Franklin and I waited to see what was coming next. The Sergeant stood at the window, with



his hands in his pockets, looking out, and whistling the tune of the "Last Rose of Summer" softly to himself. Later in the proceedings, I discovered that he only forgot his manners so far as to whistle, when his mind was hard at work, seeing its way inch by inch to its own private ends, on which occasions the "Last Rose of Summer" evidently helped and encouraged him. I suppose it fitted in somehow with his character. It reminded him, you see, of his favorite roses, and, as *he* whistled it, it was the most melancholy tune going.

Turning from the window, after a minute or two, the Sergeant walked into the middle of the room, and stopped there, deep in thought, with his eyes on Miss Rachel's bedroom door. After a little he roused himself, nodded his head, as much as to say, "That will do!" and, addressing me, asked for ten minutes' conversation with my mistress, at her ladyship's earliest convenience.

Leaving the room with this message, I heard Mr. Franklin ask the Sergeant a question, and stopped to hear the answer also at the threshold of the door.

"Can you guess yet," inquired Mr. Franklin, "who has stolen the Diamond?"

"*Nobody has stolen the Diamond,*" answered Sergeant Cuff.



We both started at that extraordinary view of the case, and both earnestly begged him to tell us what he meant.

“Wait a little,” said the Sergeant. “The pieces of the puzzle are not all put together yet.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE STATEMENT OF SERGEANT CUFF

#### I.

DORKING, Surrey, *July* 30, 1849. — To Franklin Blake, Esq. Sir, — I beg to apologize for the delay that has occurred in the production of the Report with which I engaged to furnish you. I have waited to make it a complete report; and I have been met, here and there, by obstacles which it was only possible to remove by some little expenditure of patience and time.

The object which I proposed to myself has now, I hope, been attained. You will find, in these pages, answers to the greater part — if not all — of the questions, concerning the late Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, which occurred to your mind when I last had the honor of seeing you.

I propose to tell you — in the first place — what is known of the manner in which your cousin met

his death; appending to the statement such inferences and conclusions as we are justified (according to my opinion) in drawing from the facts.

I shall then endeavor — in the second place — to put you in possession of such discoveries as I have made, respecting the proceedings of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, before, during, and after the time, when you and he met as guests at the late Lady Verinder's country house.

## II.

As to your cousin's death, then, first.

It appears to me to be established, beyond any reasonable doubt, that he was killed (while he was asleep, or immediately on his waking) by being smothered with a pillow from his bed — that the persons guilty of murdering him are the three Indians — and that the object contemplated (and achieved) by the crime, was to obtain possession of the diamond, called the Moonstone.

The facts from which this conclusion is drawn, are derived partly from an examination of the room at the tavern; and partly from the evidence obtained at the Coroner's Inquest.

On forcing the door of the room the deceased gentleman was discovered, dead, with the pillow of the bed over his face. The medical man who ex-

amined him, being informed of this circumstance, considered the post-mortem appearances as being perfectly compatible with murder by smothering — that is to say, with murder committed by some person, or persons, pressing the pillow over the nose and mouth of the deceased, until death resulted from congestion of the lungs.

Next, as to the motive for the crime.

A small box, with a sealed paper torn off from it — the paper containing an inscription — was found open, and empty, on a table in the room. Mr. Luker has himself personally identified the box, the seal, and the inscription. He has declared that the box did actually contain the diamond, called the Moonstone; and he has admitted having given the box (thus sealed up) to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite (then concealed under a disguise), on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth of June last. The fair inference from all this is, that the stealing of the Moonstone was the motive of the crime.

Next, as to the manner in which the crime was committed.

On examination of the room (which is only seven feet high), a trap-door in the ceiling, leading out on to the roof of the house, was discovered open. The short ladder, used for obtaining access to the trap-door (and kept under the bed), was found placed at the opening, so as to enable any person,

or persons, in the room, to leave it again easily. In the trap-door itself was found a square aperture cut in the wood, apparently with some exceedingly sharp instrument, just behind the bolt which fastened the door on the inner side. In this way any person from the outside could have drawn back the bolt, and opened the door, and have dropped (or have been noiselessly lowered by an accomplice) into the room — its height, as already observed, being only seven feet. That some person, or persons, must have got admission in this way, appears evident from the fact of the aperture being there. As to the manner in which he (or they) obtained access to the roof of the tavern, it is to be remarked that the third house, lower down in the street, was empty and under repair — that a long ladder was left by the workmen, leading from the pavement to the top of the house — and that, on returning to their work on the morning of the 27th, the men found the plank which they had tied to the ladder, to prevent any one from using it in their absence, removed, and lying on the ground. As to the possibility of ascending by this ladder, passing over the roofs of the houses, passing back and descending again, unobserved — it is discovered, on the evidence of the night policeman, that he only passes through Shore Lane twice in an hour when out on his beat. The testimony of the in-



habitants also declares that Shore Lane, after midnight, is one of the quietest and loneliest streets in London. Here again, therefore, it seems fair to infer that — with ordinary caution and presence of mind — any man, or men, might have ascended by the ladder, and might have descended again, unobserved. Once on the roof of the tavern, it has been proved, by experiment, that a man might cut through the trap-door while lying down on it, and that in such a position the parapet in front of the house would conceal him from the view of any one passing in the street.

Lastly, as to the person, or persons, by whom the crime was committed.

It is known (1) that the Indians had an interest in possessing themselves of the Diamond. (2) It is at least probable that the man looking like an Indian, whom Octavius Guy saw at the window of the cab speaking to the man dressed like a mechanic, was one of the three Hindoo conspirators. (3) It is certain that this same man dressed like a mechanic, was seen keeping Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite in view all through the evening of the 26th, and was found in the bedroom (before Mr. Ablewhite was shown into it) under circumstances which lead to the suspicion that he was examining the room. (4) A morsel of torn gold thread was picked up in the bedroom, which persons expert



in such matters declare to be of Indian manufacture, and to be a species of gold thread not known in England. (5) On the morning of the 27th, three men, answering to the description of the three Indians, were observed in Lower Thames Street, were traced to the Tower Wharf, and were seen to leave London by the steamer bound for Rotterdam.

There is here moral, if not legal, evidence that the murder was committed by the Indians.

Whether the man personating a mechanic was, or was not, an accomplice in the crime, it is impossible to say. That he could have committed the murder alone seems beyond the limits of probability. Acting by himself, he could hardly have smothered Mr. Ablewhite — who was the taller and the stronger man of the two — without a struggle taking place, or a cry being heard. A servant girl, sleeping in the next room, heard nothing. The landlord, sleeping in the room below, heard nothing. The whole evidence points to the inference that more than one man was concerned in this crime — and the circumstances, I repeat, morally justify the conclusion that the Indians committed it.

I have only to add that the verdict at the Coroner's Inquest was willful murder against some person, or persons, unknown. Mr. Ablewhite's family have offered a reward, and no effort has been

left untried to discover the guilty persons. The man dressed like a mechanic has eluded all inquiries. The Indians have been traced. As to the prospect of ultimately capturing these last, I shall have a word to say to you on that head when I reach the end of the present Report.

In the meanwhile, having now written all that is needful on the subject of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, I may pass next to the narrative of his proceedings before, during, and after the time when you and he met at the late Lady Verinder's house.

### III.

With regard to the subject now in hand, I may state, at the outset, that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's life had two sides to it.

The side turned up to the public view presented the spectacle of a gentleman, possessed of considerable reputation as a speaker at charitable meetings, and endowed with administrative abilities, which he placed at the disposal of various Benevolent Societies, mostly of the female sort. The side kept hidden from the general notice exhibited this same gentleman in the totally different character of a man of pleasure, with a villa in the suburbs which was not taken in his own name, and with a

lady in the villa who was not taken in his own name either.

My investigations in this villa have shown me several fine pictures and statues; furniture tastefully selected and admirably made; and a conservatory of the rarest flowers, the match of which it would not be easy to find in all London. My investigation of the lady has resulted in the discovery of jewels which are worthy to take rank with the flowers, and of carriages and horses which have (deservedly) produced a sensation in the Park among persons well qualified to judge of the build of the one and the breed of the others.

All this is, so far, common enough. The villa and the lady are such familiar objects in London life that I ought to apologize for introducing them to notice. But what is not common and not familiar (in my experience) is that all these fine things were not only ordered but paid for. The pictures, the statues, the flowers, the jewels, the carriages, and the horses — inquiry proved, to my indescribable astonishment, that not a sixpence of debt was owing on any of them. As to the villa, it had been bought, out and out, and settled on the lady.

I might have tried to find the right reading of this riddle, and tried in vain — but for Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, which caused an inquiry to be made into the state of his affairs.

The inquiry elicited these facts:

That Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was intrusted with the care of a sum of twenty thousand pounds — as one of two Trustees for a young gentleman, who was still a minor in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight. That the Trust was to lapse, and that the young gentleman was to receive the twenty thousand pounds on the day when he came of age, in the month of February, eighteen hundred and fifty. That, pending the arrival of this period, an income of six hundred pounds was to be paid to him by his two Trustees, half yearly — at Christmas and at Midsummer-Day. That this income was regularly paid by the active Trustee, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. That the twenty thousand pounds (from which the income was supposed to be derived) had, every farthing of it, been sold out of the Funds, at different periods, ending with the end of the year eighteen hundred and forty-seven. That the power of attorney, authorizing the bankers to sell out the stock, and the various written orders telling them what amounts to sell out, were formally signed by both the Trustees. That the signature of the second Trustee (a retired army officer, living in the country) was a signature forged, in every case, by the active Trustee — otherwise Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite.

In these facts lies the explanation of Mr. God-



frey's honorable conduct in paying the debts incurred for the lady and the villa — and (you will presently see) of more besides.

\* \* \* \* \*

We may now advance to the date of Miss Verinder's birthday (in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight) — the twenty-first of June.

On the day before, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite arrived at his father's house, and asked (as I know from Mr. Ablewhite, senior, himself) for a loan of three hundred pounds. Mark the sum; and remember at the same time that the half-yearly payment to the young gentleman was due on the twenty-fourth of the month. Also, that the whole of the young gentleman's fortune had been spent by his Trustee by the end of the year 'forty-seven.

Mr. Ablewhite, senior, refused to lend his son a farthing.

The next day Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite rode over, with you, to Lady Verinder's house. A few hours afterward Mr. Godfrey (as you yourself have told me) made a proposal of marriage to Miss Verinder. Here he saw his way, no doubt — if accepted — to the end of all his money anxieties, present and



future. But, as events actually turned out, what happened? Miss Verinder refused him.

On the night of the birthday, therefore, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's pecuniary position was this: He had three hundred pounds to find on the twenty-fourth of the month, and twenty thousand pounds to find in February, eighteen hundred and fifty. Failing to raise these sums, at these times, he was a ruined man.

Under those circumstances, what takes place next?

You exasperate Mr. Candy, the doctor, on the sore subject of his profession, and he plays you a practical joke in return, with a dose of laudanum. He trusts the administration of the dose (prepared in a little vial) to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, who has himself confessed the share he had in the matter, under circumstances which shall presently be related to you. Mr. Godfrey is all the readier to enter into the conspiracy, having himself suffered from your sharp tongue, in the course of the evening. He joins Betteredge in persuading you to drink a little brandy-and-water before you go to bed. He privately drops the dose of laudanum into your cold grog. And you drink the mixture.

Let us now shift the scene, if you please, to Mr. Luker's house at Lambeth. And allow me to remark, by the way of preface, that Mr. Bruff and

I, together, have found a means of forcing the money-lender to make a clean breast of it. We have carefully sifted the statement he has addressed to us; and here it is at your service.

#### IV.

Late on the evening of Friday, the twenty-third of June ('forty-eight), Mr. Luker was surprised by a visit from Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. He was more than surprised when Mr. Godfrey produced the Moonstone. No such diamond (according to Mr. Luker's experience) was in the possession of any private person in Europe.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite had two modest proposals to make in relation to this magnificent gem. First, Would Mr. Luker be so good as to buy it? Secondly, Would Mr. Luker (in default of seeing his way to purchase) undertake to sell it on commission, and to pay a sum down, on the anticipated result?

Mr. Luker tested the Diamond, weighed the Diamond, and estimated the value of the Diamond, before he answered a word. His estimate (allowing for the flaw in the stone) was thirty thousand pounds.

Having reached that result Mr. Luker opened his lips and put a question: "How did you come

by this? ” Only six words! But what volumes of meaning in them!

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite began a story. Mr. Luker opened his lips again, and only said three words, this time. “That won’t do.”

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite began another story. Mr. Luker wasted no more words on him. He got up and rang the bell for the servant to show the gentleman out.

Upon this compulsion, Mr. Godfrey made an effort, and came out with a new and amended version of the affair, to the following effect.

After privately slipping the laudanum into your brandy-and-water, he wished you good-night, and went into his own room. It was the next room to yours, and the two had a door of communication between them. On entering his own room Mr. Godfrey (as he supposed) closed this door. His money-troubles kept him awake. He sat, in his dressing-gown and slippers, for nearly an hour, thinking over his position. Just as he was preparing to go into bed, he heard you talking to yourself in your own room, and going to the door of communication, found that he had not shut it as he supposed.

He looked into your room to see what was the matter. He discovered you with the candle in your hand, just leaving your bedchamber. He

heard you say to yourself, in a voice quite unlike your own voice, "How do I know? The Indians may be hidden in the house."

Up to that time he had simply supposed himself (in giving you the laudanum) to be helping to make you the victim of a harmless practical joke. It now occurred to him that the laudanum had taken some effect on you which had not been foreseen by the doctor, any more than by himself. In the fear of an accident happening, he followed you softly to see what you would do.

He followed you to Miss Verinder's sitting-room, and saw you go in. You left the door open. He looked through the crevice thus produced, between the door and the post, before he ventured into the room himself.

In that position, he not only detected you in taking the Diamond out of the drawer — he also detected Miss Verinder, silently watching you from her bedroom, through her open door. He saw that she saw you take the Diamond too.

Before you left the sitting-room again, you hesitated a little. Mr. Godfrey took advantage of this hesitation to get back again to his bedroom before you came out and discovered him. He had barely gone back, before you got back too. You saw him (as he supposes) just as he was passing through the door of communication. At any



rate, you called to him in a strange, drowsy voice.

He came back to you. You looked at him in a dull, sleepy way. You put the Diamond into his hand. You said to him, "Take it back, Godfrey, to your father's bank. It's safe there — it's not safe here." You turned away unsteadily, and put on your dressing-gown. You sat down in the large arm-chair in your room. You said, "I can't take it back to the bank. My head's like lead — and I can't feel my feet under me." Your head sank on the back of the chair — you heaved a heavy sigh — and you fell asleep.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite went back, with the Diamond, into his own room. His statement is, that he came to no conclusion at that time — except that he would wait, and see what happened in the morning.

When the morning came, your language and conduct showed that you were absolutely ignorant of what you had said and done overnight. At the same time, Miss Verinder's language and conduct showed that she was resolved to say nothing (in mercy to you) on her side. If Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite chose to keep the Diamond, he might do so with perfect impunity. The Moonstone stood between him and ruin. He put the Moonstone into his pocket.



## V.

This was the story told by your cousin (under pressure of necessity) to Mr. Luker.

Mr. Luker believed the story to be, as to all main essentials, true — on this ground, that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was too great a fool to have invented it. Mr. Bruff and I agree with Mr. Luker, in considering this test of the truth of the story to be a perfectly reliable one.

The next question was the question of what Mr. Luker would do, in the matter of the Moonstone. He proposed the following terms, as the only terms on which he would consent to mix himself up with what was (even in *his* line of business) a doubtful and dangerous transaction.

Mr. Luker would consent to lend Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite the sum of two thousand pounds, on condition that the Moonstone was to be deposited with him as a pledge. If, at the expiration of one year from that date, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite paid three thousand pounds to Mr. Luker, he was to receive back the Diamond, as a pledge redeemed. If he failed to produce the money at the expiration of the year, the pledge (otherwise the Moonstone) was to be considered as forfeited to Mr. Luker — who would, in this latter case, generously

make Mr. Godfrey a present of certain promissory notes of his (relating to former dealings) which were then in the money-lender's possession.

It is needless to say that Mr. Godfrey indignantly refused to listen to these monstrous terms. Mr. Luker, thereupon, handed him back the Diamond, and wished him good-night.

Your cousin went to the door, and came back again. How was he to be sure that the conversation of that evening would be kept strictly a secret between his friend and himself?

Mr. Luker didn't profess to know how. If Mr. Godfrey had accepted his terms, Mr. Godfrey would have made him an accomplice, and might have counted on his silence as on a certainty. As things were, Mr. Luker must be guided by his own interests. If awkward inquiries were made, how could he be expected to compromise himself, for the sake of a man who had declined to deal with him?

Receiving this reply, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite did, what all animals (human and otherwise) do, when they find themselves caught in a trap. He looked about him in a state of helpless despair. The day of the month, recorded on a neat little card in a box on the money-lender's chimney-piece, happened to attract his eye. It was the twenty-third of June. On the twenty-fourth, he had three

hundred pounds to pay to the young gentleman for whom he was trustee, and no chance of raising the money, except the chance that Mr. Luker had offered to him. But for this miserable obstacle, he might have taken the Diamond to Amsterdam, and have made a marketable commodity of it, by having it cut up into separate stones. As matters stood, he had no choice but to accept Mr. Luker's terms. After all, he had a year at his disposal, in which to raise the three thousand pounds — and a year is a long time.

Mr. Luker drew out the necessary documents on the spot. When they were signed, he gave Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite two checks. One, dated June 23d, for three hundred pounds. Another, dated a week on, for the remaining balance — seventeen hundred pounds.

How the Moonstone was trusted to the keeping of Mr. Luker's bankers, and how the Indians treated Mr. Luker and Mr. Godfrey (after that had been done) you know already.

The next event in your cousin's life, refers again to Miss Verinder. He proposed marriage to her for the second time — and (after having been accepted) he consented, at her request, to consider the marriage as broken off. One of his reasons for making this concession has been penetrated by Mr. Bruff. Miss Verinder had only a life-interest

in her mother's property — and there was no raising the missing twenty thousand pounds on *that*.

But you will say, he might have saved the three thousand pounds, to redeem the pledged Diamond, if he had married. He might have done so certainly — supposing neither his wife, nor her guardians and trustees, objected to his anticipating more than half of the income at his disposal, for some unknown purpose, in the first year of his marriage. But even if he got over this obstacle, there was another waiting for him in the background. The lady at the Villa had heard of his contemplated marriage. A superb woman, Mr. Blake, of the sort that are not to be trifled with — the sort with the light complexion and the Roman nose. She felt the utmost contempt for Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. It would be silent contempt if he made a handsome provision for her. Otherwise, it would be contempt with a tongue to it. Miss Verinder's life-interest allowed him no more hope of raising the "provision," than of raising the twenty thousand pounds. He couldn't marry — he really couldn't marry under all the circumstances.

How he tried his luck again with another lady, and how *that* marriage also broke down on the question of money, you know already. You also know of the legacy of five thousand pounds, left



to him shortly afterward, by one of those many admirers among the soft sex whose good graces this fascinating man had contrived to win! That legacy (as the event has proved) led him to his death.

I have ascertained that when he went abroad, on getting his five thousand pounds, he went to Amsterdam. There he made all the necessary arrangements for having the Diamond cut into separate stones. He came back (in disguise), and redeemed the Moonstone on the appointed day. A few days were allowed to elapse (as a precaution agreed to by both parties) before the jewel was actually taken out of the bank. If he had got safe with it to Amsterdam there would have been just time between July 'forty-nine and February 'fifty (when the young gentleman came of age) to cut the Diamond, and to make a marketable commodity (polished or unpolished) of the separate stones. Judge from this what motives he had to run the risk which he actually ran. It was "neck or nothing" with him — if ever it was "neck or nothing" with a man yet.

I have only to remind you, before closing this report, that there is a chance of laying hands on the Indians, and of recovering the Moonstone yet. They are now (there is every reason to believe) on their passage to Bombay on an East

Indiaman. The ship (barring accidents) will touch at no other port on her way out: and the authorities of Bombay (already communicated with by letter overland) will be prepared to board the vessel the moment she enters the harbor.

I have the honor to remain, dear sir, your obedient servant, RICHARD CUFF (late Sergeant in the Detective Force, Scotland Yard, London).

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## THE FINDING OF THE DIAMOND.

### I.

THE STATEMENT OF SERGEANT CUFF'S MAN (1849).

On the twenty-seventh of June last I received instructions from Sergeant Cuff to follow three men, suspected of murder, and described as Indians. They had been seen on the Tower Wharf that morning, embarking on board the steamer bound for Rotterdam.

I left London by a steamer belonging to another company, which sailed on the morning of Thursday, the 28th.

Arriving at Rotterdam, I succeeded in finding the commander of the Wednesday's steamer. He

informed me that the Indians had certainly been passengers on board his vessel—but as far as Gravesend only. Off that place, one of the three had inquired at what time they would reach Calais. On being informed that the steamer was bound to Rotterdam, the spokesman of the party expressed the greatest surprise and distress at the mistake which he and his two friends had made. They were all willing (he said) to sacrifice their passage-money, if the commander of the steamer would only put them ashore. Commiserating their position, as foreigners in a strange land, and knowing no reason for detaining them, the commander signaled for a shore boat, and the three men left the vessel.

This proceeding of the Indians having been plainly resolved on beforehand, as a means of preventing their being traced, I lost no time in returning to England. I left the steamer at Gravesend, and discovered that the Indians had gone from that place to London. Thence I again traced them as having left for Plymouth. Inquiries made at Plymouth proved that they had sailed, forty-eight hours previously, in the *Bewley Castle*, East Indiaman, bound direct for Bombay.

On receiving this intelligence, Sergeant Cuff caused the authorities at Bombay to be communicated with overland—so that the vessel might be

boarded by the police immediately on her entering the port. This step having been taken, my connection with the matter came to an end. I have heard nothing more of it since that time.

## II.

### THE STATEMENT OF THE CAPTAIN (1849).

I am requested by Sergeant Cuff to set in writing certain facts, concerning three men (believed to be Hindoos) who were passengers, last summer, in the ship *Bewley Castle*, bound for Bombay direct, under my command.

The Hindoos joined us at Plymouth. On the passage out I heard no complaint of their conduct. They were berthed in the forward part of the vessel. I had but few occasions myself of personally noticing them.

In the latter part of the voyage we had the misfortune to be becalmed for three days and nights off the coast of India. I have not got the ship's Journal to refer to, and I cannot now call to mind the latitude and longitude. As to our position, therefore, I am only able to state generally that the currents drifted us in toward the land, and that, when the wind found us again, we reached our port in twenty-four hours afterward.



The discipline of a ship (as all sea-faring persons know) becomes relaxed in a long calm. The discipline of my ship became relaxed. Certain gentlemen among the passengers got some of the smaller boats lowered and amused themselves by rowing about, and swimming, when the sun, at evening time, was cool enough to let them divert themselves in that way. The boats, when done with, ought to have been slung up again in their places. Instead of this they were left moored to the ship's side. What with the heat, and what with the vexation of the weather, neither officers nor men seemed to be in heart for their duty while the calm lasted.

On the third night nothing unusual was heard or seen by the watch on deck. When the morning came the smallest of the boats was missing — and the three Hindoos were next reported to be missing, too.

If these men had stolen the boat shortly after dark (which I have no doubt they did), we were near enough to the land to make it vain to send in pursuit of them, when the discovery was made in the morning. I have no doubt they got ashore, in that calm weather (making all due allowance for fatigue and clumsy rowing), before daybreak.

On reaching our port, I there learned, for the first time, the reason my three passengers had for

seizing their opportunity of escaping from the ship. I could only make the same statement to the authorities which I have made here. They considered me to blame for allowing the discipline of the vessel to be relaxed. I have expressed my regret on this score to them and to my owners. Since that time nothing has been heard, to my knowledge, of the three Hindoos. I have no more to add to what is here written.

### III.

THE STATEMENT OF MR. MURTHWAITE (1850).

*(In a letter to Mr. Bruff.)*

Have you any recollection, my dear sir, of a semi-savage person whom you met out at dinner, in London, in the autumn of 'forty-eight? Permit me to remind you that the person's name was Murthwaite, and that you and he had a long conversation together after dinner. The talk related to an Indian Diamond, called the Moonstone, and to a conspiracy then in existence to get possession of the gem.

Since that time I have been wandering in Central Asia. Thence, I have drifted back to the scene of some of my past adventures in the north

and northwest of India. About a fortnight since I found myself in a certain district or province (but little known to Europeans) called Kattiawar.

Here an adventure befell me, in which (incredible as it may appear) you are personally interested.

In the wild regions of Kattiawar (and how wild they are you will understand when I tell you that even the husbandmen plow the land armed to the teeth) the population is fanatically devoted to the old Hindoo religion — to the ancient worship of Brahma and Vishnu. The few Mohammedan families, thinly scattered about the villages in the interior, are afraid to taste meat of any kind. A Mohammedan even suspected of killing that sacred animal, the cow, is, as a matter of course, put to death without mercy in these parts, by the pious Hindoo neighbors who surround him. To strengthen the religious enthusiasm of the people, two of the most famous shrines of Hindoo pilgrimage are contained within the boundaries of Kattiawar. One of them is Dwarka, the birth-place of the god Krishna. The other is the sacred city of Somnauth — sacked and destroyed as long since as the eleventh century, by the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni.

Finding myself, for the second time, in these romantic regions, I resolved not to leave Kattiawar

without looking once more on the magnificent desolation of Somnauth. At the place where I planned to do this, I was (as nearly as I could calculate it) some three days distant, journeying on foot, from the sacred city.

I had not been long on the road before I noticed that other people — by twos and threes — appeared to be traveling in the same direction as myself.

To such of these as spoke to me I gave myself out as a Hindoo-Buddhist, from a distant province, bound on a pilgrimage. It is needless to say that my dress was of the sort to carry out this description. Add, that I know the language as well as I know my own, and that I am lean enough and brown enough to make it no easy matter to detect my European origin — and you will understand that I passed muster with the people readily; not as one of themselves, but as a stranger from a different part of their own country.

On the second day the number of Hindoos traveling in my direction had increased to fifties and hundreds. On the third day the throng had swollen to thousands; all slowly converging to one point — the city of Somnauth.

A trifling service which I was able to render to one of my fellow pilgrims during the third day's journey proved the means of introducing me to



certain Hindoos of the higher caste. From these men I learned that the multitude was on its way to a great religious ceremony, which was to take place on a hill at a little distance from Somnauth. The ceremony was in honor of the god of the Moon; and it was to be held at night.

The crowd detained us as we drew near to the place of celebration. By the time we reached the hill the moon was high in the heavens. My Hindoo friends possessed some special privileges which enabled them to gain access to the shrine. They kindly allowed me to accompany them. When we arrived at the place we found the shrine hidden from our view by a curtain hung between two magnificent trees. Beneath the trees a flat projection of rock jutted out, and formed a species of natural platform. Below this I stood, in company with my Hindoo friends.

Looking back down the hill, the view presented the grandest spectacle of Nature and Man, in combination, that I have ever seen. The lower slope of the eminence melted imperceptibly into a grassy plain, the place of the meeting of three rivers. On one side the graceful winding of the waters stretched away, now visible, now hidden by trees, as far as the eye could see. On the other the waveless ocean slept in the calm of the night. People this lovely scene with tens of thousands of

human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers. Light this halt of the pilgrims by the wild red flames of cressets and torches, streaming up at intervals from every part of the innumerable throng. Imagine the moonlight of the East, pouring in unclouded glory over all — and you will form some idea of the view that met me, when I looked forth from the summit of the hill.

A strain of plaintive music, played on stringed instruments and flutes, recalled my attention to the hidden shrine.

I turned, and saw on the rocky platform the figures of three men. In the central figure of the three I recognized the man to whom I had spoken in England, when the Indians appeared on the terrace at Lady Verinder's house. The other two, who had been his companions on that occasion, were no doubt his companions also on this.

One of the Hindoos, near whom I was standing, saw me start. In a whisper he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of the rock.

They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night

the three men were to part. In three separate directions, they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India. Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation to the day which witnessed their death.

As those words were whispered to me the plaintive music ceased. The three men prostrated themselves on the rock, before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose — they looked on one another — they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd part at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand, white mass of the people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow-mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more.

A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered and pressed together.

The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view.

There, raised high on a throne, seated on his typical antelope, with his four arms stretching toward the four corners of the earth, there soared above us, dark and awful in the mystic light of

heaven, the god of the Moon. And there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond whose splendor had last shone on me, in England, from the bosom of a woman's dress!

Yes; after the lapse of eight centuries the Moonstone looks forth once more over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it has found its way back to its wild native land — by what accident, or by what crime, the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem — may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it forever.

So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycle of Time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?



*Monsieur Lecoq,—Master-Mind*

*GABORIAU*

*M. LECOQ was really an exaggeration according to a recent authority of the well-known and wonderfully able Paris detective M. Vidocq (A man of genius indeed in the arts of make-up, dissimulation, and deduction) but there is an individuality in spite of the family likeness. The favored few in this generation who have read the Memoirs of Vidocq will readily catch this point. It remains to add that the art of making-up the face and figure, like an actor, which was very much resorted to in the first half of the nineteenth century in Europe, is now almost wholly outworn. Operatives nowadays often disguise themselves as laboring-men or followers of other humble callings, but the elaborate dressing-table of M. Lecoq described in this story would be considered laughable to-day.*

*To speak of the detective-novel, says Carolyn Wells, to whom we owe the most careful study of the subject so far produced by an American, is to speak of Gaboriau. He cannot be called the father of it, but he made the field so peculiarly his own, developed its type of human nature so painstakingly, created so distinctive a reputation associated with it, that it is doubtful whether any one can be said to have outrivaled him. — EDITOR.*

*Monsieur Lecoq,—*  
*Master-Mind*

EMILE GABORIAU <sup>1</sup>

**I**N the Paris journal of February 28, 186 —, there appeared the following intelligence:

“A daring robbery, committed during the night at one of our principal bankers’, M. André Fauvel, has created great excitement this morning in the neighborhood of the Rue de Provence. The thieves, who were as skilful as they were daring, succeeded in effecting an entrance to the bank, in forcing the lock of a safe that has heretofore been considered impregnable, and in possessing themselves of bank-notes, of the value of three hundred and fifty thousand francs. The police, immediately informed of the robbery, displayed their accustomed zeal, and their efforts have been crowned with success. Already, it is said, P. B., a clerk in the bank, has been arrested, and there is every reason to hope that his accomplices will be speedily overtaken by the hand of justice.”

<sup>1</sup> From File No. 113.

For four days this robbery was the talk of Paris. Then public attention was engrossed by later and equally interesting events; an acrobat broke his leg at the circus; an actress made her *début* at a minor theatre; and news of the 28th was soon forgotten.

But for once the newspapers were — perhaps designedly — wrong, or at least inaccurate in their information. The sum of three hundred and fifty thousand francs had certainly been stolen from M. André Fauvel's bank, but not in the manner described. A clerk had also been arrested on suspicion, but no conclusive proof had been forthcoming against him. This robbery of unusual importance remained, if not inexplicable, at least unexplainable.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the same hour that Madame Nina Gipsy<sup>2</sup> was seeking refuge at the Grand Archangel, so highly recommended by Fanferlot, Prosper Bertomy was being consigned to the depot of the Préfecture of Police. From the moment he had resumed his habitual composure, he never once faltered. His face was stolid as marble, and one would have supposed him insensible to the horrors of his condition, had not his heavy breathing, and

<sup>2</sup> The mistress of Prosper Bertomy the suspect.



the beads of perspiration standing on his brow, betrayed the intense agony he was suffering.

While Prosper was going through the formalities of the commitment, he replied with haughty brevity to the indispensable questions that were put to him. But after being ordered to empty his pockets on the table, they began to search him, his eyes flashed with indignation, and a single tear coursed down his flushed cheek. In an instant he had recovered his stony calmness, and stood up motionless, with his arms raised in the air so that the rough creatures about him could more conveniently ransack him from head to foot, to assure themselves that he had no suspicious object concealed under his clothes.

The search would have, perhaps, been carried to the most ignominious lengths, but for the intervention of a middle-aged man of rather distinguished appearance, who wore a white cravat and gold spectacles, and was sitting at his ease by the fire. He started with surprise, and seemed much agitated, when he saw Prosper brought in by the officers; he stepped forward, as if about to speak to him, then suddenly changed his mind, and sat down again.

In spite of his own troubles, Prosper could not help perceiving that this man kept his eyes upon him. Did he know him? Vainly did he try to

recollect having met him before. This individual, treated with all the deference due to a chief, was no less a personage than M. Lecoq, a celebrated member of the detective police. When the men who were searching Prosper were about to take off his boots, under the idea that a knife might be concealed in them, M. Lecoq waved them aside with an air of authority, and said: "You have done enough."

He was obeyed. All the formalities being ended, the unfortunate cashier was taken to a narrow cell; the heavily-barred door was swung to and locked upon him; he breathed freely; at last he was alone. Yes, he believed himself to be alone. He was ignorant that a prison is made of glass, that the prisoner is like a miserable insect under the microscope of an entomologist. He knew not that the walls have listening ears and watchful eyes. He felt so certain of being alone that he at once gave vent to his suppressed feelings, and, dropping his mask of impassibility, burst into a flood of tears. His long-restrained anger now flashed out like a smouldering fire. In a paroxysm of rage he uttered imprecations and curses. He dashed himself against the prison walls like a wild beast in a cage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Seated at a desk in the middle of a large room, half library and half theatrical dressing-room, fur-

nished in a curious style, was the same individual with gold spectacles, who had said to Prosper at the Préfecture, "Have courage." This was M. Lecoq in his official character.

Fanferlot,<sup>3</sup> on his entrance, advanced respectfully, bowing till his backbone was a perfect curve. M. Lecoq laid down his pen, and looking sharply at him, said: "Ah, so here you are, young man. Well, it seems that you haven't made much progress in Bertomy's case."

"What," murmured Fanferlot, "you know —"

"I know that you have muddled everything until you can't see your way out; so that you are ready to give in."

"But, M. Lecoq, it was not I —"

M. Lecoq rose, and walked up and down the room; suddenly he confronted Fanferlot, and said in a tone of scornful irony: "What would you think, Master Squirrel, of a man who abuses the confidence of those who employ him, who reveals just enough to lead the prosecution on the wrong scent, who sacrifices to his own foolish vanity the cause of justice and the liberty of an unfortunate prisoner?"

Fanferlot started back with a scared look. "I should say," he stammered, "I should say —"

"You would say this man ought to be punished,

<sup>3</sup> The detective who has been first detailed.

and dismissed from his employment; and you are right. The less a profession is honored, the more honorable should those be who belong to it. And yet you have been false to yours. Ah! Master Squirrel, we are ambitious, and we try to make the police service forward our own views! We let justice go astray, and we go on a different tack. One must be a more cunning bloodhound than you are, my friend, to be able to hunt without a huntsman. You are too self-reliant by half."

"But, my chief, I swear —"

"Silence! Do you pretend to say that you did your duty, and told all you knew to the investigating magistrate? Whilst others were giving information against the cashier, you were getting up evidence against the banker. You watched his movements; you became intimate with his valet."

Was M. Lecoq really angry, or pretending to be so? Fanferlot, who knew him well, was puzzled as to whether all this indignation was real.

"Still, if you were only skilful," continued M. Lecoq, "it would be another matter; but no; you wish to be master, and you are not even fit to be a journeyman."

"You are right, my chief," said Fanferlot pitiously, for he saw that it was useless for him to deny anything. "But how could I go about an



affair like this, where there was not even a trace, a sign of any kind to start from? ”

M. Lecoq shrugged his shoulders. “ You are an ass! ” exclaimed he. “ Why, don’t you know that on the very day you were sent for with the commissary to verify the fact of the robbery, you held — I do not say certainly, but very probably held — in your great stupid hands the means of knowing which key had been used when the money was stolen? ”

“ How is that? ”

“ You want to know, do you? I will tell you. Do you remember the scratch you discovered on the safe? You were so struck by it, that you could not refrain from calling out directly you saw it. You carefully examined it, and were convinced that it was a fresh scratch, only a few hours old. You thought, and rightly too, that this scratch was made at the time of the theft. Now, with what was it made? Evidently with a key. That being the case, you should have asked for the keys both of the banker and the cashier. One of them would have probably had some particles of the hard green paint sticking to it.”

Fanferlot listened with open mouth to this explanation. At the last words, he violently slapped his forehead with his hand and cried out: “ Idiot! idiot! ”



"You have correctly named yourself," said M. Lecoq. "Idiot! This proof stares you right in the face, and you don't see it! This scratch is the only clew there is to follow, and you must like a fool neglect it. If I find the guilty party, it will be by means of this scratch; and I am determined that I will find him."

At a distance the Squirrel very bravely abuses and defies M. Lecoq; but, in his presence, he yields to the influence which this extraordinary man exercises upon all who approach him. This exact information, these minute details just given him, so upset his mind that he could not imagine where and how M. Lecoq had obtained them. Finally he humbly said: "You have then been occupying yourself with this case, my chief?"

"Probably I have; but I am not infallible, and may have overlooked some important evidence. Take a seat, and tell me all you know."

Fanferlot, knowing he could not falsify anything to M. Lecoq, told him all he knew, and in return discovered that M. Lecoq already knew it.

"Then, my chief," said Fanferlot, "you have been more successful than Madame Alexandre; you have made the little girl <sup>4</sup> confess? You know why she leaves the Grand Archangel, why she does not wait for M. de Lagors, and why she has bought herself some cotton dresses?"

<sup>4</sup> Mme. Nina Gipsy, Bertomy's mistress.

"She is following my advice."

"That being the case," said the detective dejectedly, "there is nothing left for me to do, but to acknowledge myself an ass."

"No, Squirrel," said M. Lecoq kindly, "you are not an ass. You merely did wrong in undertaking a task beyond your capacity. Have you progressed one step since you started in this affair? No. That shows that, although you are incomparable as a lieutenant, you do not possess the qualities of a general. I am going to present you with an aphorism; remember it, and let it be your guide in the future: 'A man can shine in the second rank, who would be totally eclipsed in the first.'"

Never had Fanferlot seen his chief so talkative and good-natured. Finding his deceit discovered, he had expected to be overwhelmed with a storm of anger; whereas he had escaped with a little shower that had cooled his brain. Lecoq's anger disappeared like one of those heavy clouds which threaten in the horizon for a moment, and then are suddenly swept away by a gust of wind.

But this unexpected affability made Fanferlot feel uneasy. He was afraid that something might be concealed beneath it. "Do you know who the thief is, my chief?" he inquired.

"I know no more than you do, Fanferlot; and you seem to have made up your mind, whereas I am still undecided. You declare the cashier to be

innocent, and the banker guilty. I don't know whether you are right or wrong. I follow after you, and have got no further than the preliminaries of my investigation. I am certain of but one thing, and that is, the scratch on the safe door. That scratch is my starting point."

As he spoke, M. Lecoq took from his desk an immense sheet of paper which he unrolled. On this paper was photographed the door of M. Fauvel's safe. Every detail was rendered perfectly. There were the five movable buttons with the engraved letters, and the narrow, projecting brass lock. The scratch was indicated with great exactness.

"Now," said M. Lecoq, "here is our scratch. It runs from top to bottom, starting diagonally, from the keyhole, and proceeding from left to right; that is to say, it terminates on the side next to the private staircase leading to the banker's apartments. Although very deep at the keyhole, it ends in a scarcely perceptible mark."

"Yes, my chief, I see all that."

"Naturally you thought that this scratch was made by the person who took the money. Let us see if you were right. I have here a little iron box, painted green like M. Fauvel's safe; here it is. Take a key, and try to scratch it."

"The deuce take it!" said Fanferlot after several attempts, "this paint is awfully hard to move!"

"Very hard, my friend, and yet that on the safe is harder still, and more solid. So you see the scratch you discovered could not have been made by the trembling hand of a thief letting the key slip."

"Sapristi!" exclaimed Fanferlot amazed; "I never should have thought of that. It certainly required great force to make the deep scratch on the safe."

"Yes, but how was that force applied? I have been racking my brain for three days, and it was only yesterday that I came to a conclusion. Let us examine if my conjectures present enough chances of probability to establish a starting point."

M. Lecoq put the photograph aside, and, walking to the door communicating with his bedroom, took the key from the lock, and, holding it in his hands, said: "Come here, Fanferlot, and stand by my side, there; very well. Now suppose that I want to open this door, and that you don't wish me to open it; when you see me about to insert the key, what would be your first impulse?"

"To put my hands on your arm, and draw it towards me so as to prevent your introducing the key."

"Precisely so. Now let us try it; go on." Fanferlot obeyed; and the key held by M. Lecoq, pulled aside from the lock, slipped along the door,



and traced upon it, from above to below, a diagonal scratch, the exact reproduction of the one in the photograph.

"Oh, oh, oh!" exclaimed Fanferlot in three different tones of admiration, as he stood gazing in a reverie at the door.

"Do you begin to understand?" asked M. Lecoq.

"Understand, my chief? Why, a child could understand it now. Ah, what a man you are! I see the scene as if I had been there. Two persons were present at the robbery; one wished to take the money, the other wished to prevent its being taken. That is clear, that is certain."

Accustomed to triumphs of this sort, M. Lecoq was much amused at Fanferlot's enthusiasm. "There you go off, half-primed again," he said good-humoredly; "you regard as certain proof a circumstance which may be accidental, and at the most only probable."

"No, my chief; no! a man like you could not be mistaken; doubt is no longer possible."

"That being the case, what deductions would you draw from our discovery?"

"In the first place, it proved that I am correct in thinking the cashier innocent."

"How so?"

"Because, being at perfect liberty to open the



safe whenever he wished to do so, it is not likely that he would have had a witness present when he intended to commit the theft."

"Well reasoned, Fanferlot. But on this supposition the banker would be equally innocent; reflect a little."

Fanferlot reflected, and all his confidence vanished. "You are right," he said in a despairing tone. "What can be done now?"

"Look for the third rogue, or rather the real rogue, the one who opened the safe, and stole the notes, and who is still at large, while others are suspected."

"Impossible, my chief, impossible! Don't you know that M. Fauvel and his cashier had keys, and they only? And they always kept these keys in their possession."

"On the evening of the robbery the banker left his key in his *escritoire*."

"Yes; but the key alone was not sufficient to open the safe; it was necessary that the word also should be known."

M. Lecoq shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "What was the word?" he asked.

"Gipsy."

"Which is the name of the cashier's mistress. Now keep your eyes open. The day you find a man sufficiently intimate with Prosper to be aware

of all the circumstances connected with this name, and who is at the same time on such a footing with the Fauvel family as would give him the privilege of entering M. Fauvel's chamber, then, and not until then, will you discover the guilty party. On that day the problem will be solved."

"I shall rely upon you," continued M. Lecoq. "Now to begin, you must carry this photograph to the investigating magistrate. I know M. Patrigent is much perplexed about the case. Explain to him as if it were your own discovery, what I have just shown you; repeat for his benefit the experiment we have performed, and I am convinced that this evidence will determine him to release the cashier. Prosper must be at liberty before I can commence my operations."

"Of course, my chief; but must I let him know that I suspect any one besides the banker or cashier? "

"Certainly. The authorities must not be kept in ignorance of your intention of following up this affair. M. Patrigent will tell you to watch Prosper; you will reply that you will not lose sight of him. I myself will answer for his being in safe keeping."

"Suppose he asks me about Nina Gipsy? "

M. Lecoq hesitated for a moment. "Tell him," he finally said, "that you persuaded her, in the interest of Prosper, to live in a house where she can watch some one whom you suspect."

Fanferlot rolled up the photograph and joyously seized hold of his hat, intending to depart, when M. Lecoq checked him by waving his hand, and said: "I have not finished yet. Do you know how to drive a carriage and manage horses? "

"How can you ask such a question as this, my chief, of a man who used to be a rider in the Bouthor Circus? "

"Very good. As soon as the magistrate dismisses you, return home immediately, obtain for yourself a wig and the complete dress of a valet; and, when you are ready, take this letter to the agency for servants at the corner of the Passage Delorme."

"But, my chief — "

"There must be no but, my friend; the agent will send you to M. de Clameran, who is wanting a valet, his man having left him yesterday."

"Excuse me, if I venture to suggest that I think you are laboring under a wrong impression. This De Clameran is not the cashier's friend."

"Why do you always interrupt me? " said M. Lecoq imperiously. "Do what I tell you, and don't disturb your mind about the rest. I know that De Clameran is not a friend of Prosper's; but he is the friend and protector of Raoul de Lagors. Why so? Whence the intimacy of these two men of such different ages? That is what I must find out. I must also find out who this ironmaster is

who spends all his time in Paris, and never goes to look after his forges. An individual, who takes it into his head to live at the Hôtel du Louvre, in the midst of a constantly changing crowd, is a fellow difficult to watch. Through you I will keep an eye upon him. He has a carriage, which you will have to drive; and you will soon be able to give me an account of his manner of life, and of the sort of people with whom he associates."

"You shall be obeyed, my chief."

"Another thing. M. de Clameran is irritable and suspicious. You will be presented to him under the name of Joseph Dubois. He will ask for certificates of your good character. Here are three, which state that you have lived with the Marquis de Sairmeuse and the Count de Commarin, and that you have just left the Baron de Wortschen, who went to Germany the other day. Now keep your eyes open; be careful of your get-up and manners. Be polite, but not excessively so. And, above all things, don't be too honest; it might arouse suspicion."

"I understand, my chief. Where shall I report to you? "

"I will see you daily. Until I tell you differently, don't put foot in this house; you might be followed. If anything important should happen,



send a telegram to your wife, and she will inform me. Go, and be prudent."

The door closed on Fanferlot as M. Lecoq passed into his bedroom. In the twinkling of an eye the latter divested himself of the appearance of chief detective. But in an hour he had accomplished one of his daily masterpieces. When he had finished, he was no longer Lecoq.

"Well," he said, casting a last look in the mirror, "I have forgotten nothing; I have left nothing to chance. All my plans are fixed; and I shall make some progress to-day, provided the Squirrel does not waste time."

But Fanferlot was too happy to waste even a minute. He did not run, he flew, towards the Palais de Justice. At last he was able to convince some one that he, Fanferlot, was a man of wonderful perspicacity. As to acknowledging that he was about to obtain a triumph with the ideas of another man, he never thought of such a thing. It is generally in perfect good faith that the jack-daw struts about in the peacock's feathers.

Fanferlot's hopes were not deceived. If the magistrate was not absolutely convinced, he admired the ingenuity and shrewdness of the whole proceeding. "This decides me," he said, as he dismissed Fanferlot. "I will draw up a favorable report to-day; and it is highly probable that the



accused will be released to-morrow." He began at once to write out one of those terrible decisions of "Not proven," which restores liberty, but not honor, to the accused man; which says that he is not guilty, but does not say that he is innocent:

"Whereas sufficient proofs are wanting against the accused, Prosper Bertomy, in pursuance of Article 128 of the Criminal Code, we hereby declare that no grounds at present exist for prosecuting the aforesaid prisoner; and we order that he be released from the prison where he is confined, and set at liberty by the jailer," etc.

"Well," said he to the clerk, "here we have another of those crimes which justice cannot clear up. The mystery remains to be solved. There is another file to be stowed away among the police records." And with his own hand he wrote on the cover of the bundle of papers relating to Prosper's case, its number of rotation: File No. 113.

\* \* \* \* \*

Prosper had been languishing in his cell for nine days, when one Thursday morning the jailer came to appraise him of the magistrate's decision. He was conducted before the officer who had searched him when he was arrested; and his watch, penknife, and several small articles of jewelry,

were restored to him; then he was told to sign a large sheet of paper, which he did.

He was next led across a dark passage, and almost pushed through a door, which was abruptly shut upon him. He found himself on the quay; he was alone; he was free.

His first thought of a friend was Nina Gipsy. He went at once to the house in Rue Chaptal. The concierge greeted him gladly, informing him that no one remained in the house, who knew him, but his father's friend, the stout gentleman with red whiskers.

Prosper was astounded. What could be the meaning of one of his father's friends occupying his rooms? He did not, however, betray his surprise, but quietly said: "Yes, I know who it is."

He quickly ran up the stairs, and knocked at his door, which was at once opened by his father's friend. He had been accurately described by the concierge. A stout man, with a red face, full lips, sharp eyes, and of rather coarse manners, stood bowing to Prosper, who had never seen him before.<sup>5</sup> "Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir," said he.

He seemed to be perfectly at home. On the table lay a book, which he had taken from the book-

<sup>5</sup> M. Lecoq.

case; and he appeared ready to do the honors of the place.

"I must say, sir," began Prosper.

"That you are surprised to find me here? So I suppose. Your father intended introducing me to you; but he was compelled to return to Beaucaire this morning; and let me add that he departed thoroughly convinced, as I myself am, that you never took a sou from M. Fauvel."

At this unexpected good news, Prosper's face lit up with pleasure.

"Here is a letter from your father, which I hope will serve as an introduction between us."

Prosper opened the letter; and as he read his eyes grew brighter, and a slight color returned to his pale face. When he had finished he held out his hand to the stout gentleman, and said: "My father tells me, sir, that you are his best friend; he advises me to have absolute confidence in you, and to follow your advice."

"Exactly. This morning your father said to me: 'Verduret' — that is my name — 'Verduret, my son is in great trouble, and must be helped out of it.' I replied: 'I am both ready and willing,' and here I am to assist you. Now the ice is broken, is it not? Then let us go to work at once. What do you intend doing?"

This question revived Prosper's slumbering rage.

His eyes flashed. "What do I intend doing?" said he angrily; "what should I do but seek the villain who has ruined me?"

"So I supposed; but have you any means of success?"

"None; yet I shall succeed, because, when a man devotes his whole life to the accomplishment of an object, he is certain to achieve it."

"Well said, M. Prosper; and, to be frank, I fully expected that this would be your purpose. I have therefore already begun to think and act for you. I have a plan. In the first place, you will sell this furniture, and disappear from the neighborhood."

"Disappear!" cried Prosper indignantly; "disappear! Why, sir! do you not see that such a step would be a confession of guilt, would authorize the world to say that I am in hiding so as to enjoy undisturbed the stolen 350,000 francs?"

"Well, what then?" asked the man with the red whiskers; "did you not say just now that the sacrifice of your life is made? The expert swimmer thrown into the river, after being robbed, is careful not rise to the surface immediately; on the contrary, he plunges beneath, and remains there as long as his breath holds out. He comes up again at a great distance off, and lands out of sight; then, when he is supposed to be dead, he suddenly



reappears and has his revenge. You have an enemy? Some petty imprudence will betray him. But, while he sees you standing by on the watch, he will be on his guard."

It was with a sort of amazed submission that Prosper listened to this man, who, though a friend of his father, was an utter stranger to himself. He submitted unconsciously to the ascendancy of a nature so much more energetic and forcible than his own. In his helpless condition he was grateful for friendly assistance, and said: "I will follow your advice, sir."

"I was sure you would, my dear fellow. Let us reflect upon the course you ought to pursue. And remember that you will need every franc of the proceeds of the sale. Have you any ready money? no, but you must have some. Knowing that you would need this at once, I have already spoken to an upholsterer; and he will give you twelve thousand francs for everything, minus the pictures."

The cashier could not refrain from shrugging his shoulders, which M. Verduret observed. "Well," said he, "it is rather hard, I admit, but it is a necessity. Now listen; you are the invalid, and I am the doctor charged to cure you; if I cut to the quick, you will have to endure it. It is the only way to save you."

“Cut away then,” answered Prosper.

“Well, we will make haste, for time presses. You have a friend, M. de Lagors?”

“Raoul? Yes, he is an intimate friend of mine.”

“Now tell me, who is this fellow?”

The term “fellow” seemed to offend Prosper. “M. de Lagors,” he said haughtily, “is M. Fauvel’s nephew; he is a wealthy young man, handsome, intelligent, cultivated, and the best friend I have.”

“Hum!” said M. Verduret, “I shall be delighted to make the acquaintance of one adorned by so many charming qualities. I must let you know that I wrote him a note in your name asking him to come here, and he sent word that he would come.”

“What! do you suppose —”

“Oh, I suppose nothing! Only I must see this young man. Also I have arranged and will submit to you a little plan of conversation —” A ring at the outer door interrupted M. Verduret. “The deuce!” exclaimed he; “adieu to my plan; here he is! Where can I hide so as to both hear and see?”

“There, in my bedroom; leave the door open and the curtain down.”

A second ring was heard. “Now remember,

Prosper," said M. Verduret in a warning tone, "not one word to this man about your plans, or about me. Pretend to be discouraged, helpless, and undecided what to do." And he disappeared behind the curtain as Prosper ran to open the door.

Prosper's portrait of M. de Lagors was no exaggerated one. Such an open and handsome countenance, and manly figure, could belong only to a noble character. Although Raoul said he was twenty-four, he appeared to be not more than twenty. He had a fine figure, well knit and supple; an abundance of light chestnut-colored hair, curled over his intelligent-looking forehead, and his large blue eyes, which beamed with candor. His first impulse was to throw himself into Prosper's arms. "My poor, dear friend!" he said, "my poor Prosper!"

But beneath these affectionate demonstrations there was a certain constraint, which, if it escaped the perception of the cashier, was noticed by M. Verduret. "Your letter, my dear Prosper," said Raoul, "made me almost ill, I was so frightened by it. I asked myself if you could have lost your mind. Then I put aside everything, to hasten to your assistance; and here I am."

Prosper did not seem to hear him; his thoughts were occupied with the letter which he had not written. What were its contents? Who was this stranger whose assistance he had accepted?

"You must not feel discouraged," continued M. de Lagors; "you are young enough to commence life anew. Your friends are still left to you. I have come to say to you: 'Rely upon me; I am rich, half of my fortune is at your disposal.'"

This generous offer, made at a moment like this with such frank simplicity, deeply touched Prosper. "Thanks, Raoul," he said with emotion, "thank you! But unfortunately all the money in the world would be of no use now."

"Why so? What, then, are you going to do? Do you propose to remain in Paris?"

"I know not, Raoul. I have formed no plan yet. My mind is too confused for me to think."

"I will tell you what to do," resumed Raoul quickly; "you must start afresh; until this mysterious robbery is explained you must keep away from Paris. Excuse my frankness, but it will never do for you to remain here."

"And suppose it never should be explained?"

"Only the more reason for your remaining in oblivion. I have been talking about you to De Clameran. 'If I were in Prosper's place,' he said, 'I would turn everything into money, and embark for America; there I would make a fortune, and return to crush with my millions those who have suspected me.'"

This advice offended Prosper's pride, but he interposed no kind of objection. He was recalling



to mind what his unknown visitor had said to him. "I will think it over," he finally observed. "I will see. I should like to know what M. Fauvel says."

"My uncle? I suppose you know that I have declined the offer he made me to enter his banking house, and we have almost quarrelled. I have not set foot in his house for over a month; but I hear of him occasionally."

"Through whom? "

"Through your friend Cavaillon. My uncle, they say, is more distressed by this affair than you are. He does not attend to his business, and seems as though he had just recovered from some serious illness."

"And Madame Fauvel, and — " Prosper hesitated — "and Mademoiselle Madeleine, how are they? "

"Oh," said Raoul lightly, "my aunt is as pious as ever; she has mass said for the benefit of the sinner. As to my handsome, icy cousin, she cannot bring herself down to common matters because she is entirely absorbed in preparing for the fancy ball to be given the day after to-morrow by MM. Jandidier. She has discovered, so one of her friends told me, a wonderful dressmaker, a stranger who has suddenly appeared from no one knows where, and who is making for her a costume of

one of Catherine de Médicis' maids of honor. I hear it is to be a marvel of beauty."

Excessive suffering brings with it a kind of dull insensibility and stupor; but this last remark of M. de Lagors' touched Prosper to the quick, and he murmured faintly: "Madeleine! O Madeleine!"

M. de Lagors, pretending not to have heard him, rose from his chair, and said: "I must leave you now, my dear Prosper; on Saturday I shall see these ladies at the ball, and bring you news of them. Now, take courage, and remember that, whatever happens, you have a friend in me."

Raoul shook Prosper by the hand and departed, leaving the latter standing immovable and overcome by disappointment. He was aroused from his gloomy reverie by hearing the red-whiskered man saying in a bantering tone, "So this is one of your friends?"

"Yes," said Prosper with bitterness. "Yet you heard him offer me half of his fortune?"

M. Verduret shrugged his shoulders with an air of compassion. "That was very stingy on his part," said he; "why did he not offer the whole? Offers cost nothing; although I have no doubt that this sweet youth would cheerfully give ten thousand francs to put the ocean between you and him."

“What reason, sir, would he have for doing this?”

“Who knows? Perhaps for the same reason that he told you he had not set foot in his uncle’s house for a month.”

“But that is the truth, I am sure of it.”

“Naturally,” said M. Verduret with a provoking smile. “But,” continued he with a serious air, “we have devoted enough time to this Adonis, whose measure I have taken. Now, be good enough to change your dress, and we will go and call on M. Fauvel.”

This proposal aroused Prosper’s anger. “Never!” he exclaimed excitedly: “no, never will I voluntarily set eyes on that wretch!”

This resistance did not surprise M. Verduret. “I can understand your feelings towards him,” said he; “but at the same time I hope you will change your mind. For the same reason that I wished to see M. de Lagors, I desire to see M. Fauvel; it is necessary, you understand. Are you so weak that you cannot contain yourself for five minutes? I shall introduce myself as one of your relatives, and you need not open your lips.”

“If it is positively necessary,” said Prosper, “if —”

“It is necessary; so come on. You must have confidence, and put on a brave face. Hurry and

make yourself trim; it is getting late, and I am hungry. We will lunch on our way there."

Prosper had hardly passed into his bedroom when the bell rang again. M. Verduret opened the door. It was the concierge, who handed him a bulky letter, and said: "This letter was left this morning for M. Bertomy; I was so flustered when he came that I forgot to hand it to him. It is a very odd-looking letter; is it not, sir?"

It was indeed a most peculiar missive. The address was not written, but formed of printed letters, carefully cut from a book, and pasted on the envelope.

"Oh, ho! what is this!" cried M. Verduret; then turning towards the man he said: "Wait a moment." He went into the next room, and closed the door behind him. There he found Prosper, anxious to know what was going on. "Here is a letter for you," observed M. Verduret.

Prosper at once tore open the envelope. Some bank notes dropped out; he counted them; there were ten. The cashier turned very red. "What does this mean?" he asked.

"We will read the letter and find out," replied Verduret, shortly.

The letter, like the address, was composed of printed words cut out and pasted on a sheet of paper. It was short but explicit:



“ My dear Prosper — A friend, who knows the horror of your situation, sends you this succor. There is one heart, be assured, that shares your sufferings. Go away — leave France. You are young; the future is before you. Go, and may this money bring you happiness! ”

As M. Verduret read the note, Prosper's rage increased. He was angry and perplexed, for he could not explain the rapidly succeeding events which were so calculated to mystify his already confused brain. “ Everybody wishes me to go away,” he cried; “ there is evidently a conspiracy against me.”

M. Verduret smiled with satisfaction. “ At last you begin to open your eyes, you begin to understand. Yes, there are people who hate you because of the wrong they have done you; there are people to whom your presence in Paris is a constant danger, and who will not feel safe till they are rid of you.”

“ But who are these people? Tell me, who dares send this money? ”

“ If I knew, my dear Prosper, my task would be at an end, for then I should know who committed the robbery. But we will continue our researches. I have finally procured evidence which will sooner or later become convincing proof. I have heretofore only made deductions more or less

probable; I now possess knowledge which proves that I was not mistaken. I walked in darkness; now I have a light to guide me."

As Prosper listened to M. Verduret's reassuring words, he felt hope rising in his breast.

"Now," said M. Verduret, "we must take advantage of this evidence, gained by the imprudence of our enemies, without delay. We will begin with the concierge."

He opened the door, and called out: "I say, my good man, step here a moment."

The concierge entered, looking very much surprised at the authority exercised over his lodger by this stranger.

"Who gave you this letter?" asked M. Verduret.

"A messenger, who said he was paid for bringing it."

"Do you know him?"

"I know him well; he is the commissionaire whose post is at the corner of the Rue Pigalle."

"Go and bring him here."

After the concierge had gone, M. Verduret drew his diary from his pocket and compared a page of it with the notes which he had spread over the table. "These notes were not sent by the thief," he said, after an attentive examination of them.

"Do you think so?"

"I am confident of it; that is, unless he is en-

dowed with extraordinary penetration and forethought. One thing is certain: these ten thousand francs are not part of the three hundred and fifty thousand which were stolen from the safe."

"Yet," said Prosper, who could not account for this certainty on the part of his protector, "yet —"

"There is no yet about it; I have the numbers of all the stolen notes."

"What! When even I do not know them myself?"

"But the Bank did, fortunately. When we undertake an affair we must anticipate everything, and forget nothing. It is a poor excuse for a man to say, 'I did not think of it,' when he commits some oversight. I thought of the Bank."

If in the beginning Prosper had felt some repugnance about confiding in his father's friend, the feeling had now disappeared. He understood that alone, scarcely master of himself, governed only by the inspirations of inexperience, he would never have had the patient perspicacity of this singular man.

Verduret continued, talking to himself, as if he had absolutely forgotten Prosper's presence; "Then, as this missive did not come from the thief, it can only come from the other person, who was near the safe at the time of the robbery, but could not prevent it, and now feels remorse. The

probability of two persons assisting at the robbery, a probability suggested by the scratch, is now converted into a certainty. Ergo, I was right."

Prosper, listening attentively, tried hard to comprehend this monologue, which he dared not interrupt.

"Let us seek," the stout man went on to say, "this second person, whose conscience pricks him, and yet who dares not reveal anything." Here he read the letter over several times, scanning the sentences, and weighing every word. "Evidently this letter was composed by a woman," he finally said. "Never would a man doing another man a service, and sending him money, use the word 'succor.' A man would have said, loan, money, or some other equivalent, but succor, never. No one but a woman, ignorant of masculine susceptibilities, would have naturally made use of this word to express the idea it represents. As to the sentence, 'There is one heart' and so on, it could only have been written by a woman."

"You are mistaken, sir, I think," said Prosper; "no woman is mixed up in this affair."

M. Verduret paid no attention to this interruption; perhaps he did not hear it, perhaps he did not care to argue the matter. "Now, let us see if we can discover whence the printed words were taken to compose this letter."

He went to the window, and began to study the



pasted words with all the scrupulous attention which an antiquary would devote to an old, half-effaced manuscript. "Small type," he said, "very slender and clear; the paper is thin and glossy. Consequently, these words have not been cut from a newspaper, magazine, or even a novel. Yet I have seen type like this — I recognize it, I am sure Didot often uses it, so does Mame of Tours."

He suddenly stopped, his mouth open, and his eyes fixed, appealing as though anxiously to his memory. Suddenly he struck his forehead exultingly. "Now I have it!" he cried; "now I have it! Why did I not see it at once? These words have all been cut from a prayer book. We will look, at least, and then we shall be certain."

He moistened one of the words pasted on the paper with his tongue, and when it was sufficiently softened, he detached it with a pin. On the other side of this word was the Latin word, *Deus*.

"Ah, ah!" he exclaimed with a little laugh of satisfaction, "I knew it. Old Tabaret would be pleased to see this. But what has become of the mutilated prayer book? Can it have been burned? No, because a heavy-bound book is not easily burned. It has been thrown aside in some corner."

He was here interrupted by the concierge, who returned with the commissionaire from the Rue Pigalle.

"Ah, here you are," said M. Verduret, encouragingly. Then he showed him the envelope of the letter, and asked: "Do you remember bringing this letter here this morning?"

"Perfectly, sir. I took particular notice of the direction; we don't often see anything like it."

"Who told you to bring it? — a gentleman, or a lady?"

"Neither, sir; it was a commissionaire."

This reply made the concierge laugh very much, but not a muscle of M. Verduret's face moved.

"A commissionaire? Well, do you know this colleague of yours?"

"I never saw him before."

"What was he like?"

"He was neither tall nor short; he wore a green velvet jacket, and his badge."

"Your description is so vague that it would suit every commissionaire in the city; but did your colleague tell you who sent the letter?"

"No, sir. He simply put ten sous in my hand, and said: 'Here, carry this to No. 39 Rue Chaptal; a cabman on the boulevard handed it to me.' Ten sous! I warrant you he made more than that by it."

This answer seemed to disconcert M. Verduret. The taking of so many precautions to send this letter disturbed him and upset all his plans.

"Do you think you would recognize the commissioner again?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, if I saw him."

"How much do you gain a day as a commissioner?"

"I can't exactly tell; but mine is a good corner, and I am busy going errands nearly all day. I suppose I make from eight to ten francs."

"Very well; I will give you ten francs a day if you will walk about the streets, and look for the commissioner who gave you this letter. Every evening, at eight o'clock, come to the Grand Archangel, on the Quai Saint Michel, to give me a report of your search and receive your pay. Ask for M. Verduret. If you find the man I will give you fifty francs. Do you agree?"

"I should rather think I do."

"Then don't lose a minute. Start off!"

Although ignorant of M. Verduret's plans, Prosper began to comprehend the sense of his investigations. His fate depended upon their success, and yet he almost forgot this fact in his admiration of this singular man; for his energy, his bantering coolness when he wished to discover anything, the certainty of his deductions, the fertility of his expedients, and the rapidity of his movements, were astonishing.

"Do you still think, sir," said Prosper when the

man had left the room, "you see a woman's hand in this affair?"

"More than ever; and a pious woman too, who has at least two prayer books, since she could cut up one to write to you."

"And you hope to find the mutilated book?"

"I do, thanks to the opportunity I have of making an immediate search; which I will set about at once."

Saying this, he sat down, and rapidly scratched off a few lines on a slip of paper, which he folded up, and put in his waistcoat pocket. "Are you ready to go to M. Fauvel's?" he then asked. "Yes? Come on, then; we have certainly earned our lunch to-day."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Raoul de Lagors spoke of M. Fauvel's extraordinary dejection, he had been guilty of no exaggeration. Since the fatal day when, upon his denunciation, his cashier had been arrested, the banker, this active, energetic man of business, had been a prey to the most gloomy melancholy, and ceased to take any interest in the affairs of his banking house.

He, who had always been so devoted to his family, never came near them except at meals, when as soon as he had swallowed a few mouthfuls,



he would hastily leave the room. Shut up in his study, he would deny himself to visitors. His anxious countenance, his indifference to everybody and everything, his constant reveries and fits of abstraction, betrayed the presence of some fixed idea or of some hidden sorrow.

The day of Prosper's release, about three o'clock, M. Fauvel was, as usual, seated in his study, with his elbows resting on the table, and his face buried in his hands, when his valet abruptly entered, and with a frightened look said:

"M. Bertomy, the former cashier, is here, sir, with one of his relatives; he says he must see you."

At these words the banker jumped up as if he had been shot at. "Prosper!" he cried in a voice choked by anger, "what! does he dare —" Then remembering that he ought to control himself before his servant, he waited a few moments, and said, in a tone of forced calmness: "Ask the gentlemen to walk in."

If M. Verduret had counted upon witnessing a strange and affecting scene, he was not disappointed. Nothing could be more terrible than the attitude of these two men as they stood confronting each other. The banker's face was almost purple with suppressed anger, and he looked as if he were about to be seized with a fit of apoplexy. Prosper was pale and motionless as a corpse.

Silent and immovable, they stood glaring at each other with mortal hatred.

M. Verduret watched these two enemies with the indifference and coolness of a philosopher, who, in the most violent outbursts of human passion, merely sees subjects for meditation and study. Finally, the silence becoming more and more threatening, he decided to break it by speaking to the banker:

"I suppose you know, sir," said he, "that my young relative has just been released from prison."

"Yes," replied M. Fauvel making an effort to control himself, "yes, for want of sufficient proof."

"Exactly so, sir; and this want of proof, as stated in the decision of 'Not proven,' ruins the prospects of my relative, and compels him to leave here at once for America."

On hearing this statement, M. Fauvel's features relaxed as if he had been relieved of some fearful agony. "Ah, he is going away," he kept repeating, "he is going abroad." There was no mistaking the insulting intonation of the words, "going away! "

M. Verduret took no notice of M. Fauvel's manner. "It appears to me," he continued in an easy tone, "that Prosper's determination is a wise one. I merely wished him, before leaving Paris, to come and pay his respects to his former chief."

The banker smiled bitterly. "M. Bertomy might have spared us both this painful meeting. I have nothing to say to him, and of course he can have nothing to tell me."

This was a formal dismissal; and M. Verduret, understanding it thus, bowed to M. Fauvel and left the room accompanied by Prosper, who had not opened his lips.

They had reached the street before Prosper recovered the use of his tongue. "I hope you are satisfied, sir," said he in a gloomy tone. "You exacted this painful step, and I could but acquiesce. Have I gained anything by adding this humiliation to the others which I have had to suffer?"

"You have not, but I have," replied M. Verduret. "I could find no way of gaining access to M. Fauvel, save through you; and now I have found out what I wanted to know. I am convinced that M. Fauvel had nothing to do with the robbery."

"But you know, sir, innocence can be feigned," objected Prosper.

"Certainly, but not to this extent. And this is not all. I wished to find out if M. Fauvel would be accessible to certain suspicions. I can now confidently reply, 'yes.'"

Prosper and his companion had stopped to talk more at their ease, near the corner of Rue Lafitte,

in the middle of a large space which had lately been cleared by pulling down an old house. M. Verduret seemed to be anxious, and was constantly looking around as if he expected some one. He soon uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. At the other end of the vacant space he saw Cavaillon,<sup>6</sup> who was bareheaded and running.

The latter was so excited that he did not even stop to shake hands with Prosper, but darted up to M. Verduret, and said: "They have gone, sir!"

"How long since?"

"They went about a quarter of an hour ago."

"The deuce they did! Then we have not an instant to lose."

He handed Cavaillon the note he had written some hours before at Prosper's house.

"Here, pass this on, and then return at once to your desk; you might be missed. It was very imprudent of you to come out without your hat."

Cavaillon ran off as quickly as he had come. Prosper was astounded. "What!" he exclaimed. "You know Cavaillon?"

"So it seems," answered M. Verduret with a smile. "But we have no time to talk; come on, we must hurry!"

"Where are we going now?"

"You will soon know; let us walk fast!" And

<sup>6</sup> A clerk in M. Fauvel's bank.



he set the example by striding rapidly towards the Rue Lafayette. As they went along he continued talking more to himself than to Prosper.

“Ah,” said he, “it is not by putting both feet in one shoe that one wins a race. The trace once found, we should never rest an instant. When the savage discovers the footprints of an enemy, he follows it persistently, knowing that falling rain or a gust of wind may efface the footprints at any moment. It is the same with us; the most trifling incident may destroy the traces we are following up.”

M. Verduret suddenly stopped before a door bearing the number 81. “We are going in here,” he said to Prosper; “come along.”

They went upstairs, and stopped on the second floor before a door over which was inscribed, “Modes and Confections.” A handsome bell-rope was hanging against the wall, but M. Verduret did not touch it. He tapped with the ends of his fingers in a peculiar way, and the door instantly opened, as if some one had been watching for his signal on the other side.

A neatly dressed woman of about forty received Verduret and Prosper, and quietly ushered them into a small dining-room with several doors opening into it. This woman bowed respectfully to M. Verduret, as if he were some superior being. He

scarcely noticed her salutation, but questioned her with a look, which asked: "Well?"

She nodded affirmatively: "Yes."

"In there?" asked M. Verduret in low tone, pointing to one of the doors.

"No," replied the woman in the same tone; "there, in the little parlor."

M. Verduret opened the door of the room indicated, and pushed Prosper forward, whispering as he did so, "Go in, and keep your presence of mind."

But this injunction was useless. The instant he cast his eyes around the room into which he had so unceremoniously been pushed without any warning, Prosper exclaimed in a startled voice: "Madeleine!"

It was indeed M. Fauvel's niece, looking more beautiful than ever. Hers was that calm, dignified beauty which imposes admiration and respect. Standing in the middle of the room, near a table covered with silks and satins, she was arranging a skirt of red velvet embroidered in gold, probably the dress she was to wear as maid of honor to Catherine de Médicis. At sight of Prosper, all the blood rushed to her face, and her beautiful eyes half closed, as if she were about to faint; she clung to the table to prevent herself from falling.

Prosper well knew that Madeleine was not one

of those cold-hearted women whom nothing could disturb, and who feel sensations, but never a true sentiment. Of a tender, dreamy nature, she betrayed in the minute details of her life the most exquisite delicacy. But she was also proud, and incapable in any way of violating her conscience. When duty spoke, she obeyed.

She recovered from her momentary weakness, and the soft expression of her eyes changed to one of haughty resentment. In an offended tone she said: "What has emboldened you, sir, to be watching my movements? Who gave you permission to follow me — to enter this house?"

Prosper was certainly innocent. He longed with a word to explain what had just happened, but he was powerless to do so, and could only remain silent.

"You promised me upon your honor, sir," continued Madeleine, "that you would never again seek my presence. Is this the way you keep your word?"

"I did promise, mademoiselle, but —" He stopped.

"Oh, speak!"

"So many things have happened since that terrible day that I think I am excusable in forgetting for one hour an oath torn from me in a moment of blind weakness. It is to chance, at least to

another will than my own, that I am indebted for the happiness of once more finding myself near you. Alas! the instant I saw you my heart bounded with joy. I did not think — no, I could not think — that you would prove more pitiless than strangers have been, that you would cast me off when I am so miserable and heartbroken.”

Had not Prosper been so agitated he could have read in Madeleine’s eyes — those beautiful eyes which had so long been the arbiters of his destiny — the signs of a great inward struggle.

It was, however, in a firm voice that she replied: “You know me well enough, Prosper, to be sure that no blow can strike you without reaching me at the same time. You suffer, I suffer with you; I pity you as a sister would pity a beloved brother.”

“A sister!” said Prosper bitterly. “Yes, that was the word you used the day you banished me from your presence. A sister! Then why during three years did you delude me with vain hopes? Was I a brother to you the day we went to Notre Dame de Fourvières — that day when, at the foot of the altar, we swore to love each other forever and ever, and you fastened around my neck a holy relic and said, ‘Wear this always for my sake; never part from it, and it will bring you good fortune?’ ”



“ Prosper, my brother, my friend, if you only knew — ”

“ I know but one thing, Madeleine, which is, that you no longer love me, and that I will not live without you. O Madeleine, God only knows how I love you! ”

He was silent. He hoped for an answer. None came. But suddenly the silence was broken by a stifled sob. It was Madeleine's maid, who, seated in a corner was weeping bitterly. Madeleine had forgotten her presence.

Prosper, on entering the room, was so amazed on finding himself in the presence of Madeleine, that he noticed nothing else. With a feeling of surprise, he turned and looked at the weeping woman. He was not mistaken; this neatly dressed waiting-maid was Nina Gipsy.

Prosper was so startled that he became perfectly dumb. He stood there with ashy lips, and a chilly sensation creeping through his veins. He was terrified at the position in which he found himself. He was there, between the two women who had ruled his fate; between Madeleine, the proud heiress who spurned his love, and Nina Gipsy, the poor girl whose devotion to him he had so disdainfully rejected. And she had heard all! Poor Nina had heard the passionate avowal of her lover, had heard him swear that he could never love

any woman but Madeleine, that if his love were not reciprocated he would kill himself, as he had nothing else to live for.

Prosper could judge of her sufferings by his own. For she was wounded not only in the present, but in the past. What must be her humiliation and anger on hearing the miserable part which he, in his disappointed love, had imposed upon her? He was astonished that Nina — violence itself — remained silently weeping, instead of rising and bitterly denouncing him.

Meanwhile Madeleine had succeeded in recovering her usual calmness. Slowly and almost unconsciously she had put on her bonnet and mantle, which were lying on the sofa. Then she approached Prosper, and said: "Why did you come here? We both have need of all the courage we can command. You are unhappy, Prosper; I am more than unhappy, I am most wretched. You have a right to complain; I have not the right to shed a tear. While my heart is slowly breaking, I must wear a smiling face. You can seek consolation in the bosom of a friend; I can have no confidante but God."

Prosper tried to murmur a reply, but his pale lips refused to articulate; he was stifling. "I wish to tell you," continued Madeleine, "that I have forgotten nothing! But oh! let not this knowledge

give you any hope; the future is blank for us; but if you love me you will live. You will not, I know, add to my already heavy burden of sorrow the agony of mourning your death. For my sake, live; live the life of a good man, and perhaps the day will come when I can justify myself in your eyes. And now, O my brother, O my only friend, adieu! adieu!" She pressed a kiss upon his brow, and rushed from the room, followed by Nina Gipsy!

Prosper was alone. He seemed to be awaking from a troubled dream. He tried to think over what had just happened, and asked himself if he were losing his mind, or whether he had really spoken to Madeleine and seen Nina? He was obliged to attribute all this to the mysterious power of the strange man whom he had seen for the first time that very morning. How did this individual gain this wonderful power of controlling events to suit his own purposes? He seemed to anticipate everything, to know everything. He was acquainted with Cavaillon, he knew all Madeleine's movements; he had made even Nina become humble and submissive.

While thinking over this, Prosper had reached such a degree of exasperation, that when M. Verduret entered the little parlor, he strode towards him white with rage, and in a threatening voice, exclaimed:

“Who are you?”

The stout man did not manifest any surprise at this burst of anger, but quietly answered: “A friend of your father’s; did you not know it?”

“That, sir, is no answer; I have been surprised into being influenced by a stranger, but now — ”

“Do you want my biography — what I have been, what I am, and what I may be? What difference does it make to you? I told you that I would save you; the main point is that I am saving you.”

“Still I have the right to ask by what means you are saving me.”

“What good will it do you to know what my plans are?”

“In order to decide whether I will accept or reject them.”

“But suppose I guarantee success?”

“That is not sufficient. I do not choose to be any longer deprived of my own free will — to be exposed, without warning, to trials like those I have undergone to-day. A man of my age must know what he is doing.”

“A man of your age, Prosper, when he is blind, takes a guide, and does not undertake to point out the way to his leader.”

The half-bantering, half-commiserating tone of M. Verduret was not calculated to calm Prosper’s irritation.



"That being the case, sir," he exclaimed, "I will thank you for your past services, and decline them for the future, as I have no need of them. If I attempted to defend my honor and my life, it was because I hoped that Madeleine would be restored to me. I have been convinced to-day that all is at an end between us; I retire from the struggle, and care not what becomes of me now."

Prosper was so decided, that M. Verduret seemed alarmed. "You must be mad," he firmly said.

"No, unfortunately I am not. Madeleine has ceased to love me, and of what importance is anything else?"

His heartbroken tone aroused M. Verduret's sympathy, and he said in a kind, soothing voice — "Then you suspect nothing? You did not fathom the meaning of what she said?"

"You were listening?" cried Prosper fiercely.

"I certainly was."

"Sir!"

"Yes. It was a presumptuous thing to do, perhaps; but the end justified the means in this instance. I am glad I did listen, because it enables me to say to you: Take courage, Prosper, Mademoiselle Madeleine loves you — she has never ceased to love you."

Like a dying person who eagerly listens to deceitful promises of recovery, although he feels him-

self sinking into the grave, Prosper felt his sad heart cheered by M. Verduret's assertion. "Oh," he murmured, suddenly calmed, "if I only could hope! "

"Rely upon me, I am not mistaken. Ah, I could see the torture endured by this generous girl, while she struggled between her love and what she believed to be her duty. Were not you convinced of her love when she bade you farewell? "

"She loves me, she is free, and yet she shuns me."

"No, she is not free! In breaking off her engagement with you, she was governed by some powerful, irrepressible event. She is sacrificing herself — for whom? We shall soon know; and the secret of her self-sacrifice will reveal to us the secret of the plot against you."

As M. Verduret spoke, Prosper felt his resolutions of revolt slowly melting away, and their place occupied by confidence and hope. "If what you say were only true! " he mournfully said.

"Foolish young man! Why do you persist in obstinately shutting your eyes to the proof I place before you? Can you not see that Mademoiselle Madeleine knows who the thief is? Yes, you need not look so shocked; she knows the thief, but no human power can tear it from her. She sacrifices you, but then she almost has the right, since she first sacrificed herself."

Prosper was almost convinced; and it nearly broke his heart to leave the little apartment where he had seen Madeleine. "Alas!" he said, pressing M. Verduret's hand, "you must think me a ridiculous fool! but you don't know how I suffer."

The man with the red whiskers sadly shook his head, and his voice sounded very unsteady, as he replied in a low tone: "What you suffer, I have suffered. Like you, I loved, not a pure, noble girl, yet a girl fair to look upon. For three years I was at her feet, a slave to her every whim, when, one day, she suddenly deserted me who adored her, to throw herself into the arms of a man who despised her. Then, like you, I wished to die. Neither threats nor entreaties could induce her to return to me. Passion never reasons, and she loved my rival."

"And did you know who this rival was?"

"Yes, I knew."

"And you did not seek revenge?"

"No," replied M. Verduret. And with a singular expression he added: "For fate charged itself with my vengeance."

For a minute Prosper was silent; then he said: "I have finally decided. My honor is a sacred trust for which I must account to my family. I am ready to follow you to the end of the world; dispose of me as you judge proper."

That same day Prosper, faithful to his promise, sold his furniture, and wrote to his friends announcing his intended departure for San Francisco. In the evening he and M. Verduret installed themselves at the hotel of the Grand Archangel.

Madame Alexandre gave Prosper her prettiest room, but it was very ugly compared with the coquettish little drawing-room in the Rue Chaptal. His state of mind did not permit him, however, to notice the difference between his former and present quarters. He lay on an old sofa, meditating upon the events of the day, and feeling a bitter satisfaction in his isolated condition. About eleven o'clock he thought he would open the window, and let the cool air fan his burning brow; as he did so, a piece of paper was blown from among the folds of the window curtain and lay at his feet on the floor.

Prosper mechanically picked it up, and looked at it. It was covered with writing, the handwriting of Nina Gipsy; he could not be mistaken about that. It was the fragment of a torn letter; and if the half sentences did not convey any clear meaning, they were sufficient to lead the mind into all sorts of conjectures.

The fragment read as follows:

“of M. Raoul, I have been very im . . . plotted against him, of whom never . . . warn Prosper,



and then . . . best friend, he . . . hand of Made-moiselle Ma . . .”

Prosper never closed his eyes all that night.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the twenty years of her married life, Valentine <sup>7</sup> had experienced but one real sorrow; and this was one which, in the course of nature, must happen sooner or later. In 1859 her mother died from inflammation of the lungs, during one of her frequent journeys to Paris. The countess preserved her faculties to the last, and with her dying breath said to her daughter: “Ah, well! was I not right in prevailing upon you to bury the past? Your silence has made my old age peaceful and happy, for which I now thank you, and it assures you a quiet future.”

Madame Fauvel constantly said that, since the loss of her mother, she had never had cause to shed a tear. And what more could she wish for? As years rolled on, André’s love remained the same as it had been during the first days of their union. To the love that had not diminished was added that sweet intimacy which results from long conformity of ideas and unbounded confidence. Everything prospered with this happy couple. André was far more wealthy than he had ever hoped to be, even in his wildest visions; more so even than he or Val-

<sup>7</sup> Mme. Fauvel.

entine desired. Their two sons, Lucian and Abel, were beautiful as their mother, noble-hearted and intelligent young men, whose honorable characters and graceful bearing were the glory of their family. Nothing was wanting to insure Valentine's felicity. When her husband and her sons were absent, her solitude was cheered by the companionship of an accomplished young girl whom she loved as her own daughter, and who in return filled the place of a devoted child. Madeleine was M. Fauvel's niece, who, when an infant, had lost both parents, poor but very worthy people. Valentine adopted the babe, perhaps in memory of the poor little creature who had been abandoned to strangers. It seemed to her that God would bless her for this good action, and that Madeleine would be the guardian angel of the house. The day of the little orphan's arrival, M. Fauvel invested for her ten thousand francs, which he presented to Madeleine as her dowry. The banker amused himself by increasing these ten thousand francs in the most marvellous ways. He, who never ventured upon a rash speculation with his own money, always invested his niece's in the most hazardous schemes, and was always so successful that, at the end of fifteen years, the ten thousand francs had become half a million. People were right when they said that the Fauvel family were to be envied. Time had

dulled Valentine's remorse and anxiety. In the genial atmosphere of a happy home, she had almost found forgetfulness and a peaceful conscience. She had suffered so much at being compelled to deceive André<sup>8</sup> that she hoped she was now at quits with fate. She began to look forward to the future, and her youth seemed but buried in an impenetrable mist, the memory of a painful dream.

Yes, she believed herself saved, when, one rainy day in November, during an absence of her husband, who had gone into the provinces on business, one of the servants brought her a letter, which had been left by a stranger, who refused to give his name. Without the faintest presentiment of evil, she carelessly broke the seal, and read:

“MADAME — Would it be relying too much upon the memories of the past to hope for half an hour of your time? To-morrow, between two and three, I will do myself the honor of calling upon you. — MARQUIS DE CLAMERAN.”

Fortunately, Madame Fauvel was alone. Trembling like a leaf, she read the letter over and over again, as if to convince herself that she was not the victim of a horrible hallucination. Half a dozen times, with a sort of terror, she whispered that name once so dear — Clameran! spelling it

<sup>8</sup> A previous love affair with Gaston de Clameran.

aloud as if it were a strange name which she could not pronounce. And the eight letters forming the name seemed to shine like the lightning which precedes the thunderbolt. Ah! she had hoped and believed that the fatal past was atoned for, and buried in oblivion; and now it suddenly stood before her, pitiless and threatening. Poor woman! as if all human will could prevent what was fated to be! It was in this hour of security, when she imagined herself pardoned, that the storm was to burst upon the fragile edifice of her happiness, and destroy her every hope. A long time passed before she could collect her scattered thoughts sufficiently to reflect upon a course of action. Then she began to think she was foolish to be so frightened. This letter was written by Gaston, of course, therefore she need feel no apprehension. Gaston had returned to France, and wished to see her. She could understand this desire, and she knew too well this man, upon whom she had lavished her young affections, to attribute any bad motives to his visit. He would come; and finding her the wife of another, the mother of a family, they would exchange thoughts of the past, perhaps a few regrets; she would restore the jewels which she had faithfully kept for him, and — that would be all. But one distressing doubt beset her agitated mind. Should she conceal from Gaston the birth of his son? To



confess was to expose herself to many dangers. It was placing herself at the mercy of a man — a loyal, honorable man, to be sure — confiding to him not only her own honor and happiness, but the honor of her husband and her sons. Still, silence would be a crime. After abandoning her child, and depriving him of a mother's care and affection, she would rob him of his father's name and fortune.

She was still undecided, when the servant announced dinner. But she had not the courage to meet the glances of her sons. She sent word that she was not well, and would not be down to dinner. For the first time in her life she rejoiced at her husband's absence. Madeleine came hurrying into her aunt's room to see what was the matter; but Valentine dismissed her saying she would try to sleep off her indisposition. She wished to be alone in her trouble and her mind tried to imagine what the morrow would bring forth. This dreaded morrow soon came. She counted the hours until two o'clock; then she counted the minutes. At half-past two the servants announced: "Monsieur the Marquis de Clameran."

Madame Fauvel had promised herself to be calm, even cold. During a long, sleepless night, she had mentally arranged beforehand every detail of this painful meeting. She had even decided upon what she should say. She would reply this, and ask that.

But, at the dreaded moment, her strength gave way; a frightful emotion fixed her to her seat; she could neither speak nor think. He, however, bowed respectfully, and remained waiting in the middle of the room. He appeared about fifty years of age, with iron-gray hair and mustache, and a cold, severe cast of countenance; his expression was one of haughty severity as he stood there in his full suit of black. The agitated woman tried to discover in his face some traces of the man whom she had so madly loved, who had pressed her to his heart — the father of her son; and she was surprised to find in the person before her no resemblance to the youth whose memory had haunted her life — no, nothing. At length, as he continued to remain motionless, she faintly murmured: “Gaston!”

But he, shaking his head, replied: “I am not Gaston, madame; my brother succumbed to the misery and suffering of exile. I am Louis de Clameran.”

What! it was not Gaston, then, who had written to her — it was not Gaston who stood before her? She trembled with terror; her head whirled, and her eyes grew dim. It was not he! And her voice alone, when she called him “Gaston,” betrayed her. What, then, could this man want — this brother in whom Gaston had never cared to con-

fide? A thousand probabilities, each one more terrible than the other, flashed across her brain. Yet she succeeded in overcoming her weakness, so that Louis scarcely perceived it. The fearful strangeness of her situation, the very imminence of her peril, inspired her mind with extraordinary lucidness.

Pointing to a chair, she said to Louis with affected indifference: "Will you be kind enough, then sir, to explain the object of this most unexpected visit?"

The marquis, seeming not to notice this sudden change of manner, took a seat without removing his eyes from Madame Fauvel's face. "First of all, madame," he began, "I must ask if we can be overheard by anyone?"

"Why this question? You can have nothing to say to me that my husband and children should not hear."

Louis shrugged his shoulders, and said: "Be good enough to answer me, madame; not for my sake, but for your own."

"Speak, then, sir, you will not be heard."

In spite of this assurance, the marquis drew his chair close to the sofa where Madame Fauvel sat, so as to speak in a very low tone, as if almost afraid to hear his own voice. "As I told you, madame," he resumed, "Gaston is dead; and it

was I who closed his eyes, and received his last wishes. Do you understand? ”

The poor woman understood only too well, but racking her brain to discover what could be the purpose of this fatal visit. Perhaps it was only to claim Gaston's jewels.

“ It is unnecessary to recall,” continued Louis, “ the painful circumstances which blasted my brother's life. However happy your own lot has been, you cannot entirely have forgotten that friend of your youth who, unhesitatingly, sacrificed himself in defense of your honor.”

Not a muscle of Madame Fauvel's face moved; she appeared to be trying to recall the circumstances to which Louis alluded.

“ Have you forgotten, madame? ” he asked with bitterness. “ Then I must try and explain myself more clearly. A long, long time ago you loved my unfortunate brother.”

“ Sir! ”

“ Ah, it is useless to deny it, madame. I told you that Gaston confided everything to me — everything,” he added significantly.

But Madame Fauvel was not frightened by this information. This “ everything ” could not be of any importance, for Gaston had gone abroad in total ignorance of her secret. She rose, and said with an apparent assurance she was far from feel-



ing: "You forget, sir, that you are speaking to a woman who is now advanced in life, who is married, and who is the mother of a family. If your brother loved me, it was his affair, and not yours. If, young and ignorant, I was led into imprudence, it is not your place to remind me of it. He would not have done so. This past which you evoke I buried in oblivion twenty years ago."

"Then you have forgotten all that happened? "

"Absolutely all."

"Even your child, madame? "

This question, accompanied by one of those looks which penetrate the innermost recesses of the soul, fell upon Madame Fauvel like a thunder-bolt. She dropped tremblingly into her seat, murmuring: "He knows! How did he discover it? " Had her own happiness alone been at stake, she would have instantly thrown herself upon De Clameran's mercy. But she had her family to defend, and the consciousness of this gave her strength to resist him. "Do you wish to insult me, sir? " she asked.

"It is true, then, you have forgotten Valentin-Raoul? "

She saw that this man did indeed know all. How? It little mattered. He certainly knew; but she determined to deny everything, even in the face of the most positive proofs, if he should produce them. For an instant she had an idea of ordering the Marquis De Clameran to leave the

house; but prudence stayed her. She thought it best to find out what he was driving at. "Well," she asked, with a forced laugh, "what is it you want?"

"Listen, madame. Two years ago the vicissitudes of exile took my brother to London. There, at the house of a friend, he met a young man bearing the name of Raoul. Gaston was so struck by the youth's appearance and intelligence, that he inquired who he was, and discovered that beyond a doubt this boy was his son, and your son, madame."

"This is quite a romance you are relating."

"Yes, madame, a romance, the denouement of which is in your hands. The countess, your mother, certainly used every precaution to conceal your secret; but the best-laid plans always have some weak point. After your departure, one of your mother's London friends came to the village where you had been staying. This lady pronounced your real name before the farmer's wife who was bringing up the child. Thus everything was revealed. My brother wished for proofs, he procured the most positive, the most unobjectionable."

He stopped and watched Madame Fauvel's face to see the effect of his words. To his astonishment she betrayed not the slightest agitation or alarm; she was smiling.

"Well, what next?" she asked carelessly.

“ Then, madame, Gaston acknowledged the child. But the De Clamerans are poor; my brother died in a lodging house; and I have only an annuity of twelve hundred francs to live upon. What is to become of Raoul, alone without relations or friends to assist him? This anxiety embittered my brother’s last moments.”

“ Really, sir — ”

“ I will conclude,” interrupted Louis. “ It was then that Gaston opened his heart to me. He told me to seek you. ‘ Valentine,’ said he, ‘ Valentine will remember; she will not allow our son to want for everything, even bread; she is wealthy, very wealthy; I die in peace.’ ”

Madame Fauvel rose from her seat, evidently with the intention of dismissing her visitor. “ You must confess, sir,” she said, “ that I have shown great patience.”

This imperturbable assurance amazed Louis so much that he did not reply.

“ I do not deny,” she continued, “ that I at one time possessed the confidence of M. Gaston de Clameran. I will prove it to you by restoring to you your mother’s jewels, with which he entrusted me at the time of his departure.” While speaking she took from beneath the sofa cushion the bag of jewels, and handed it to Louis. “ Here they are, sir,” she added; “ permit me to express my sur-

prise that your brother never asked me for them."

Had he been less master of himself, Louis would have shown how great was his surprise. "I was told," he said sharply, "not to mention this matter."

Madame Fauvel, without making any reply, laid her hand on the bell rope. "You will allow me, sir," she said, "to end this interview, which was only granted for the purpose of placing in your hands these precious jewels."

Thus dismissed, M. de Clameran was obliged to take his leave without attaining his object. "As you will, madame," he said; "I leave you; but before doing so I must tell you the rest of my brother's dying injunctions: 'If Valentine disregards the past, and refuses to provide for our son, I enjoin it upon you to compel her to do her duty.' Meditate upon these words, madame, for what I have sworn to do, upon my honor, shall be done!"

At last Madame Fauvel was alone. She could give vent to her despair. Exhausted by her efforts at self-restraint during De Clameran's presence, she felt weary and crushed in body and spirit. She had scarcely strength to drag herself up to her bedchamber, and to lock the door. Now there was no room for doubt; her fears had become realities. She could fathom the abyss into which she was about to be hurled, and knew that in her fall she



would drag her family with her. God alone, in this hour of danger, could help her, could save her from destruction. She prayed. "O God," she cried, "punish me, for I am very guilty, and I will evermore adore Thy chastising hand. Punish me, for I have been a bad daughter, an unworthy mother, and a perfidious wife. Smite me, O God, and only me! In Thy just anger spare the innocent; have pity on my husband and my children!" What were her twenty years of happiness compared to this hour of misery? A bitter remorse; nothing more. Ah, why did she listen to her mother? Why did she hold her tongue? Hope had fled forever. This man who had left her presence with a threat upon his lips would return; she knew it well. What answer could she give him? To-day she had succeeded in subduing her heart and conscience; would she again have the strength to master her feelings? She well knew that her calmness and courage were entirely due to De Clameran's unskilfulness. Why did he not use entreaties instead of threats! When Louis spoke of Raoul, she could scarcely conceal her emotion; her maternal heart yearned towards the innocent child who was expiating his mother's faults. A chill of horror passed over her at the idea of his enduring the pangs of hunger. Her child wanting bread, when she, his mother, was rolling in wealth! Ah, why could

she not lay all her possessions at his feet? With what delight would she undergo the greatest privations for his sake! If she could but send him enough money to support him comfortably! But no; she could not take this step without compromising herself and her family. Prudence forbade her acceptance of Louis de Clameran's intervention. To confide in him, was placing herself, and all she held dear, at his mercy, and this inspired her with instinctive terror. Then she began to ask herself if he had really spoken the truth. In thinking over Louis' story, it seemed improbable and disconnected. If Gaston had been living in Paris, in the poverty described by his brother, why had he not demanded of the married woman the deposit entrusted to the maiden? Why, when anxious about their child's future, had he not come to her, since he believed her to be so rich that, on his deathbed, it was she he relied upon? A thousand vague apprehensions beset her mind; she felt suspicion and distrust of every one and everything. She was aware that a decisive step would bind her forever, and then, what would not be exacted of her? For a moment she thought of throwing herself at her husband's feet and confessing all. Unfortunately, she thrust aside this means of salvation. She pictured to herself the mortification and sorrow that her noble-hearted husband would

suffer upon discovering, after a lapse of twenty years, how shamefully he had been deceived. Having been deceived from the very first, would he not believe that it had been so ever since? Would he believe in her fidelity as a wife, when he discovered her perfidy as a young girl? She understood André well enough to know that he would say nothing, and would use every means to conceal the scandal. But his domestic happiness would be gone forever. He would forsake his home; his sons would shun her presence, and every family bond would be severed. She thought of ending her doubts by suicide; but her death would not silence her implacable enemy, who, not able to disgrace her while alive, would dishonor her memory.

A few days later she received a note from Louis de Clameran saying he was ill and asking her to call on him the next day. The suspense had become unendurable and she decided to go.

The next day towards the appointed time, she dressed herself in the plainest of her black dresses, in the bonnet which concealed her face the most, placed a thick veil in her pocket, and started forth. It was not until she found herself a considerable distance from her home that she ventured to hail a cab, which soon set her down at the Hôtel du Louvre. Here her uneasiness increased. Her circle of acquaintances being large, she was in

terror of being recognized. What would her friends think, if they saw her at the Hôtel du Louvre dressed as she was? Any one would naturally suspect an intrigue, a rendezvous; and her character would be ruined forever. This was the first time since her marriage that she had had occasion for mystery; and, in her inexperience, her efforts to escape notice were in every way calculated to attract attention. The concierge said that the Marquis de Clameran's room was on the third floor. She hurried up the stairs, glad to escape the scrutinizing glances which she imagined were fixed upon her; but, in spite of the minute directions given by the concierge, she lost her way in the immense hotel, and for a long time wandered about the interminable corridors. Finally, she found a door bearing the number sought — 317. She stood leaning against the wall with her hand pressed to her throbbing heart, which seemed ready to burst. Now, at the moment of risking this decisive step, she felt paralyzed with fright. The sight of a stranger traversing the corridor ended her hesitations. With a trembling hand she knocked at the door.

"Come in," said a voice.

She entered. But it was not the Marquis de Clameran who stood in the middle of the room, it was a young man almost a youth, who looked at



her with a singular expression. Madame Fauvel thought that she had mistaken the room. "Excuse me, sir," she said, blushing deeply; "I thought that this was the Marquis de Clameran's room."

"It is his room, madame," replied the young man; then seeing she was silent, and about to leave, he added: "I presume I have the honor of addressing Madame Fauvel?"

She nodded affirmatively, shuddering at the sound of her own name, and frightened at this proof of De Clameran's betrayal of her secret to a stranger. With visible anxiety she awaited an explanation.

"Fear nothing, madame," resumed the young man; "you are as safe here as if you were in your own drawing-room. M. de Clameran desired me to make his excuses; you will not see him."

"But, sir, from an urgent letter sent by him yesterday, I was led to suppose — I inferred —"

"When he wrote to you, madame, he had projects in view which he has since renounced forever."

Madame Fauvel was too surprised, too agitated to think clearly. Beyond the present she could see nothing. "Do you mean," she asked with distrust, "that he has changed his intentions?"

The young man's face was expressive of sad compassion, as if he shared the unhappy woman's sufferings. "The marquis has renounced," he said

in a melancholy tone, "what he wrongly considered a sacred duty. Believe me, he hesitated a long time before he could decide to apply to you on a subject painful to you both. You repelled him, you were obliged to hear him. He knew not what imperious reasons dictated your conduct. Blinded by unjust anger, he swore to obtain by threats what you refused to give voluntarily. Resolved to attack your domestic happiness, he had collected overwhelming proofs against you. Pardon him; an oath given to his dying brother bound him." He took from the mantel piece a bundle of papers through which he glanced as he continued speaking: "These proofs that cannot be denied, I now hold in my hand. This is the certificate of the Rev. Mr. Sedley; this the declaration of Mrs. Dobbin, the farmer's wife; and these others are the statements of the physician and of several persons who were acquainted with Madame de La Verberie during her stay near London. Not a single link is missing. I had great difficulty in getting these papers away from M. de Clameran. Perhaps he had a suspicion of my intentions. This, madame, is what I intended doing with these proofs."

With a rapid motion he threw the bundle of papers into the fire, where they blazed up, and, in a moment, nothing remained of them but a little heap of ashes. "All is now destroyed, madame,"

he resumed, his eyes sparkling with the most generous resolutions. "The past, if you desire it, is as completely annihilated as those papers. If any one hereafter, dares accuse you of having had a son before your marriage, treat him as a vile calumniator. There are no longer any proofs; you are free."

Madame Fauvel began to understand the sense of this scene—the truth dawned upon her bewildered mind. This noble youth, who protected her from De Clameran's anger, who restored her peace of mind and the exercise of her own free will, by destroying all proofs of her past, who in fact saved her, was, must be, the child whom she had abandoned—Valentin-Raoul. At this moment she forgot everything. Maternal tenderness, so long restrained, now welled up and overflowed as, in a scarcely audible voice, she murmured: "Raoul! "

At this name, uttered in so thrilling a tone, the young man staggered, as if overcome by an un-hoped-for-happiness. "Yes, Raoul," he cried; "Raoul, who would rather die a thousand times than cause his mother the slightest pain; Raoul, who would shed his life's blood to spare her one tear."

She made no attempt to struggle or resist; all her body trembled as she recognized her first-born.

She opened her arms, and Raoul sprang into them, saying, in a choked voice: "Mother! my dear mother! Bless you for this first kiss!"

Alas! this was the sad truth. This dear son she had never seen before. He had been taken from her, despite her prayers and tears, without a mother's embrace; and this kiss she had just given him was indeed the first. But joy so great, following upon so much anguish, was more than the excited mother could bear; she sank back in her chair almost fainting, and, with a sort of meditative rapture, gazed in an eager way upon her long-lost son, who was now kneeling at her feet. With her hands she stroked his soft curls; she admired his white forehead, pure as a young girl's and his large, trembling eyes; and she hungered after his red lips.

"O mother!" he said: "words cannot describe my feelings when I heard that my uncle had dared to threaten you. He threaten you! Ah! when my father told him to apply to you, he was no longer in his right mind. I have known you for a long, long time. Often have my father and I hovered around your happy home to catch a glimpse of you through the window. When you passed by in your carriage, he would say to me: 'There is your mother, Raoul!' To look upon you was our greatest joy. When we knew you were going to a ball, we would



wait near the door to see you enter, beautiful and adorned. How often, in the depth of winter, have I raced with your fast horses, to admire you till the last moment! ”

Tears — the sweetest tears she had ever shed — coursed down Madame Fauvel’s cheeks, as she listened to the musical tones of Raoul’s voice. This voice was so like Gaston’s, that it recalled to her the fresh and adorable sensations of her youth. She seemed to live over again those early stolen meetings — to feel once more the beatings of her virgin heart. It seemed as though nothing had happened since Gaston folded her in his fond embrace. André, her two sons, Madeleine — all were forgotten in this new-found affection.

Raoul went on to say: “Only yesterday I learned that my uncle had been to demand for me a few crumbs of your wealth. Why did he take such a step? I am poor, it is true — very poor; but I am too familiar with poverty to be frightened of it. I have a clear brain and willing hands — they will earn me a living. You are very rich, I have been told. What is that to me? Keep all your fortune, my darling mother; but give me a corner in your heart. Let me love you. Promise me that this first kiss shall not be the last. No one will ever know; be not afraid. I shall be able to hide my happiness.”

And Madame Fauvel had dreaded this son! Ah! how bitterly did she now reproach herself for not having sooner flown to meet him. She questioned him regarding the past; she wished to know how he had lived — what he had been doing. He replied that he had nothing to conceal; his existence had been that of every poor man's child. The farmer's wife who had brought him up had always treated him with affection. She had even given him an education superior to his condition in life, and rather beyond her means, because she thought him so handsome and intelligent. When about sixteen years of age, she procured him a situation in a banking house; and he was commencing to earn his own living, when one day a stranger came to him, and said: "I am your father," and took him away with him. Since then nothing was wanting to his happiness, save a mother's tenderness. He had suffered but one great sorrow, and that was the day when Gaston de Clameran — his father — had died in his arms. "But now," he said, "all is forgotten. Have I been unhappy? I no longer know, since I see you — since I love you."

Madame Fauvel was oblivious of the lapse of time, but fortunately Raoul was on the watch. "Why, it is seven o'clock!" he suddenly exclaimed. This exclamation brought Madame

Fauvel abruptly back to the reality. Seven o'clock! What would her family think of this long absence?

"Shall I see you again, mother?" asked Raoul, as they were about to separate.

"Oh yes!" she replied, fondly; "yes, often, every day, to-morrow."

But now, for the first time since her marriage, Madame Fauvel perceived that she was not mistress of her actions. Never before had she had occasion to wish for uncontrolled liberty. She left her heart and soul behind her in the room of the Hôtel du Louvre, where she had just found her son. She imagined that Madeleine looked at her strangely on her return home. Did she suspect something? For several days she had asked embarrassing questions. She must beware of her.

This uneasiness changed the affection which Madame Fauvel had hitherto felt for her adopted daughter into positive dislike. She, so kind and loving, regretted having placed over herself a vigilant spy from whom nothing escaped. She pondered what means she could take to avoid the penetrating watchfulness of a girl who was accustomed to read in her face every thought that crossed her mind. With unspeakable satisfaction she thought of a way which she imagined would please all parties. During the last two years the banker's cashier and protégé, Prosper Bertomy, had been

devoted in his attentions to Madeleine. Madame Fauvel decided to do all in her power to hasten matters, so that, Madeleine once married and out of the house, there would be no one to criticize her own movements. That very evening, with a duplicity of which she would have been incapable a few days before, she began to question Madeleine about her sentiments towards Prosper.

“Ah, ah, mademoiselle,” she said gayly, “is it thus you permit yourself to choose a husband without my permission?”

“But, aunt! I thought you —”

“Yes, I know; you thought I had suspected the true state of affairs? That is precisely what I had done.” Then, in a serious tone, she added: “Therefore, nothing remains but to obtain the consent of Master Prosper. Do you think he will grant it?”

“He! aunt. Ah! if he only dared —”

“Ah, indeed! you seem to know all about it, mademoiselle.”

Madeleine, blushing and confused, hung her head, and said nothing. Madame Fauvel drew her towards her, and continued in her most affectionate voice: “My dear child, do not be distressed. Is it possible that you, usually so sharp, supposed us to be in ignorance of your secret? Did you think that Prosper would have been so warmly welcomed



by your uncle and myself, had we not approved of him in every respect? ”

Madeleine threw her arms round her aunt's neck, and murmured: “ Oh, thank you, my dear aunt, thank you; you are kind, you love me! ”

Madame Fauvel said to herself: “ I will make André speak to Prosper, and before two months are over the marriage can take place.”

Unfortunately, Madame Fauvel was so engrossed by her new passion, which did not leave her a moment for reflection, that she put off this project. Spending a portion of each day at the Hôtel du Louvre with Raoul she did not cease devoting her thoughts to insuring him an independent fortune and a good position. She had not yet ventured to speak to him on the subject.

“ This,” said Louis de Clameran to her at their next meeting, “ is what I have planned. Tomorrow or next day, you will receive a letter from your cousin at St. Remy, telling you that she has sent her son to Paris, and begging you to watch over him. Naturally you show this letter to your husband; and a few days afterwards he warmly welcomes your nephew, Raoul de Lagors, a handsome, rich, attractive young man, who will do everything he can to please him, and who will succeed.”

“ Never, sir,” replied Madame Fauvel, “ my

cousin is a pious, honorable woman, and nothing would induce her to countenance so shameful a transaction."

The marquis smiled scornfully, and asked: "Who told you that I intended to confide in her?"

"But you would be obliged to do so!"

"You are very simple, madame. The letter which you will receive, and show to your husband, will be dictated by me, and posted at St. Remy by a friend of mine. If I spoke of the obligations under which you have placed your cousin, it was merely to show you that, in case of accident, her own interest would make her serve you. Do you see any other obstacle to this plan, madame?"

Madame Fauvel's eyes flashed with indignation. "Is my will of no account?" she exclaimed. "You seem to have made all your arrangements without consulting me at all."

"Excuse me," said the marquis with ironical politeness; "I am sure that you will take the same view of the matter as myself."

"But it is a crime, sir, that you propose — an abominable crime!"

This speech seemed to arouse all the bad passions slumbering in De Clameran's bosom; and his pale face had a fiendish expression as he fiercely replied: "I think we do not quite understand each other. Before you begin to talk about crime, think over

your past life. You were not so timid and scrupulous when you gave yourself over to your lover. It is true that you did not hesitate to refuse to share his exile, when for your sake he had just jeopardized his life by killing two men. You felt no scruples at abandoning your child in London; although rolling in wealth, you never even inquired if this poor waif had bread to eat. You felt no scruples about marrying M. Fauvel. Did you tell your confiding husband of the lines of shame concealed beneath your wreath of orange blossoms? No! All these crimes you indulged in; and, when in Gaston's name I demand reparation, you indignantly refuse! It is too late! You ruined the father; but you shall save the son, or I swear you shall no longer cheat the world of its esteem."

"I will obey you, sir," murmured the trembling, frightened woman.

The following week, Raoul, now Raoul de Lagors, was seated at the banker's dinner table, between Madame Fauvel and Madeleine.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was not without the most acute suffering and self-condemnation that Madame Fauvel submitted to the will of the relentless Marquis de Clameran. She had used every argument and entreaty to soften him; but he merely looked upon her with a

triumphant, sneering smile, when she knelt at his feet, and implored him to be merciful. Neither tears nor prayers moved his depraved soul. Disappointed, and almost desperate, she sought the intercession of her son. Raoul was in a state of furious indignation at the sight of his mother's distress, and hastened to demand an apology from De Clameran. But he had reckoned without his host. He soon returned with downcast eyes, and moodily angry at his own powerlessness, declaring that safety demanded a complete surrender to the tyrant. Now only did the wretched woman fully fathom the abyss into which she was being dragged, and clearly see the labyrinth of crime of which she was becoming the victim. Raoul did his utmost to deserve this cordial reception. If his early education had been neglected, and he lacked those delicate refinements of manner and conversation which home influence imparts, his superior tact concealed these defects. He possessed the happy faculty of reading characters, and adapting his conversation to the minds of his listeners. Before a week had gone by, he was a favorite with M. Fauvel, intimate with Abel and Lucien, and inseparable from Prosper Bertomy, the cashier, who then spent all his evenings with the banker's family.

Raoul's intimacy with his cousins threw him



among a set of rich young men, and as a consequence, instead of reforming, he daily grew more dissipated and reckless. Gambling, racing, expensive suppers, made money slip through his fingers like grains of sand.

In three months, Raoul had squandered a little fortune. In the first place, he was obliged to have bachelor apartments, prettily furnished. He was in want of everything, just like a shipwrecked sailor. He asked for a horse and brougham, how could she refuse him? Then every day there was some fresh whim to be satisfied.

When she would gently remonstrate, Raoul's beautiful eyes would fill with tears, and in a sad, humble tone he would say: "Alas! I am a child, a poor fool, I ask too much. I forget that I am only the son of poor Valentine, and not of the rich banker's wife!"

This touching repentance wrung her heart. The poor boy had suffered so much that it was her duty to console him, and she would finish by excusing him. She soon discovered that he was jealous and envious of his two brothers—for, after all, they were his brothers—Abel and Lucien.

"You never refuse them anything," he would say; "they were fortunate enough to enter life by the golden gate. Their every wish is gratified;

they enjoy wealth, position, home affection, and have a splendid fortune awaiting them."

"But what is lacking to your happiness, unhappy child?" Madame Fauvel would ask in despair.

"What do I want? apparently nothing, in reality everything. Do I possess anything legitimately? What right have I to your affection, to the comforts and luxuries you heap upon me, to the name I bear? Have I not, so to say, stolen even my life?"

When Raoul talked in this strain, she was ready to do anything, so that he should not be envious of her two other sons. As spring approached, she told him she wished him to spend the summer in the country, near her villa at St. Germain. She expected he would offer some objection. But not at all. The proposal seemed to please him, and a few days after he told her he had rented a little house at Vésinet, and intended having his furniture moved into it.

"Then, just think, dear mother, what a happy summer we will spend together!" he said with beaming eyes.

She was delighted for many reasons, one of which was that the prodigal's expenses would probably diminish. Anxiety as to the exhausted state of her finances made her bold enough to chide him

at the dinner-table one day for having lost two thousand francs at the races the day before.

"You are severe, my dear," said M. Fauvel with the carelessness of a rich man. "Mamma De Lagors will pay; mammas were created for the special purpose of paying." And, not observing the effect these words had upon his wife, he turned to Raoul, and added: "Don't worry yourself, my boy; when you want money, come to me, and I will lend you some."

What could Madame Fauvel say? Had she not followed De Clameran's orders, and announced that Raoul was very rich? Why had she been made to tell this unnecessary lie? She all at once perceived the snare which had been laid for her; but now she was caught, and it was too late to struggle. The banker's offer was soon accepted. That same week Raoul went to his uncle, and boldly borrowed ten thousand francs. When Madame Fauvel heard of this piece of audacity, she wrung her hands in despair.

"What can he want with so much money?" she moaned to herself.

One day, after complaining more bitterly than usual of Raoul, and proving to Madame Fauvel that it was impossible for this state of affairs to continue much longer, the marquis declared that

he saw but one way of preventing a catastrophe. This was, that he (De Clameran) should marry Madeleine. Madame Fauvel had long ago been prepared for anything his cupidity could attempt. But if she had given up all hope of happiness for herself, if she consented to the sacrifice of her own peace of mind, it was because she thus hoped to insure the security of those dear to her. This unexpected declaration shocked her. "Do you suppose for an instant, sir," she indignantly exclaimed, "that I will consent to any such disgraceful project?"

With a nod, the marquis answered: "Yes."

"What sort of a woman do you think I am, sir? Alas! I was very guilty once, but the punishment now exceeds the fault. And does it become you to be constantly reproaching me with my long-past imprudence? So long as I alone had to suffer, you found me weak and timid; but, now that you attack those I love, I rebel."

"Would it then, madame, be such a very great misfortune for Mademoiselle Madeleine to become the Marchioness de Clameran?"

"My niece, sir, chose, of her own free will, a husband whom she will shortly marry. She loves M. Prosper Bertomy."

The marquis disdainfully shrugged his shoulders.



"A school-girl-love-affair," said he; "she will forget all about it when you wish her to do so."

"I will never wish it."

"Excuse me," he replied, in the low, suppressed tone of a man trying to control himself; "let us not waste time in these idle discussions. Hitherto you have always commenced by protesting against my proposed plans, and in the end you have consented. You will do so now."

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He loved Madeleine too passionately to feel aught save the bitterest hate towards the man whom she had freely chosen, and who still possessed her heart. De Clameran knew that he could marry her at once if he chose; but in what way? By holding a sword of terror over her head, and forcing her to be his. He became frenzied at the idea of possessing her person, while her heart and soul would always be with Prosper. Thus he swore that, before marrying, he would so cover Prosper with shame and ignominy that no honest person would speak to him. He had at first thought of killing him, but he preferred to disgrace him. He imagined that there would be no difficulty in ruining the unfortunate young man. He soon found himself mistaken. Though Prosper led a life of reckless dissipation, he preserved

order in his disorder. If in a state of miserable entanglement, and obliged to resort to all sorts of make-shifts to escape his creditors, his caution prevented the world from knowing it. Vainly did Raoul with his pockets full of gold, tempt him to play high; every effort to hasten his ruin failed. When he played he did not seem to care whether he lost or won; nothing aroused him from his cold indifference. His mistress, Nina Gipsy, was extravagant, but her devotion to Prosper restrained her from going beyond certain limits. Raoul's great intimacy with Prosper enabled him to fully understand the state of his mind; that he was trying to drown his disappointment in excitement, but had not given up all hope.

"You need not hope to beguile Prosper into committing any serious piece of folly," said Raoul to his uncle; "his head is as cool as an usurer's. What object he has in view I know not. Perhaps when he has spent his last coin he will blow his brains out; he certainly never will descend to any dishonorable act; he will never have recourse to the money in the banker's safe."

"We must urge him on," replied De Clameran; "lead him into more extravagances; make Gipsy call on him for costly finery, lend him plenty of money."

Raoul shook his head, as if convinced that his

efforts would be in vain. "You don't know Prosper, uncle; we can't galvanize a dead man. Madeleine killed him the day she discarded him. He takes no interest in anything on the face of the earth."

"We can wait."

They did wait; and, to the great surprise of Madame Fauvel, Raoul once more became an affectionate and dutiful son, as he had been during De Clameran's absence. From reckless extravagance he changed to great economy. Under pretext of saving money, he remained at Vésinet, although it was very uncomfortable and disagreeable there in the winter. He wished, he said, to expiate his sins in solitude. The truth was, that, by remaining in the country, he insured his liberty, and escaped his mother's visits. It was about this time that Madame Fauvel, charmed with the improvement in Raoul, asked her husband to give him some employment in the bank. M. Fauvel was delighted to please his wife, and at once offered Raoul the place of corresponding clerk, with a salary of five hundred francs a month. The appointment pleased Raoul; but in obedience to De Clameran's command, he refused it, saying, he had no taste for banking. This refusal so provoked the banker, that he rather bitterly reproached Raoul, and told him not to expect him to do any-

thing to assist him in the future. Raoul seized this pretext for ostensibly ceasing his visits. When he wanted to see his mother, he would come in the afternoon or evening, when he knew that M. Fauvel would be from home; and he only came often enough to keep himself informed of what was going on in the household. This sudden lull after so many storms appeared ominous to Madeleine. She was more certain than ever that the plot was now ripe, and would suddenly burst upon them, without warning. She did not impart her presentiment to her aunt, but prepared herself for the worst.

“What can they be doing?” Madame Fauvel would say; “can they have decided not to persecute us any more?”

“Yes, what can they be doing?” Madeleine would murmur.

Louis and Raoul gave no signs of life, because, like expert hunters, they were silently hiding, and watching for a favorable opportunity of pouncing upon their victims. Never losing sight of Prosper for a day, Raoul had exhausted every effort of his fertile mind to compromise his honor — to ensnare him into some inextricable entanglement. But, as he had foreseen, the cashier’s indifference offered little hope of success. De Clameran began to grow impatient at this delay, and had fully determined to bring matters to a crisis himself, when one night,



about three o'clock, he was aroused by Raoul. He knew that some event of great importance must have happened, to make his nephew come to him at that hour of the night.

"What is the matter?" he anxiously inquired.

"Perhaps nothing; perhaps everything. I have just left Prosper."

"Well?"

"I had him, Madame Gipsy, and three other friends to dine with me. After dinner, I made up a game of baccarat, but Prosper took no interest in it, although he was quite tipsy."

"You must be drunk yourself, to come here waking me up in the middle of the night, to hear this idle gabble," said Louis, angrily.

"Now wait until you hear the rest."

"Zounds! speak then!"

"After the game was over, we went to supper; Prosper became quite intoxicated, and betrayed the word with which he closes the money-safe."

At these words De Clameran uttered a cry of triumph. "What was the word?"

"His mistress's name."

"Gipsy! Yes, that would be five letters." Louis was so excited that he jumped out of bed, slipped on his dressing-gown, and began to stride up and down the room. "Now we have got him!" he said, with vindictive satisfaction. "There's no

chance of escape for him now! Ah! the virtuous cashier won't touch the money confided to him; so we must touch it for him. His disgrace will be just as great no matter who opens the safe. We have the word; you know where the key is kept."

"Yes; when M. Fauvel goes out he always leaves the key in a drawer of his secretary, in his bedroom."

"Very good. You will go and get this key from Madame Fauvel. If she does not give it up willingly, use force, then, when having got the key, you will open the safe, and take out every franc it contains. Ah! Master Bertomy, you shall pay dear for being loved by the woman I love! "

For five minutes, De Clameran indulged in such a tirade of abuse against Prosper, mingled with rhapsodies of love for Madeleine, that Raoul thought him almost out of his mind, and tried to calm him. "Before crying victory," he said, "you had better consider the drawbacks and difficulties. Prosper might change the word to-morrow."

"Yes, he might; but it is not probable he will. He will forget what he said while drunk; besides, we will be quiet."

"That is not all. M. Fauvel has given orders

that no large sum shall be kept in the safe over night; before closing time, everything is sent to the Bank of France."

"A large sum will be kept there the night I choose."

"You think so?"

"I think this; I have a hundred thousand crowns deposited with M. Fauvel; and if I desire the money to be paid over to me early some morning, directly the bank is opened, of course the money will be kept in the safe the previous night."

"A splendid idea!" cried Raoul, admiringly.

It was a good idea; and the plotters spent several hours in studying its strong and weak points. Raoul feared that he would never be able to overcome Madame Fauvel's resistance; and, even if she yielded the key, would she not go directly and confess everything to her husband, rather than sacrifice an innocent man? But Louis felt no uneasiness on this score. "One sacrifice necessitates another," he said: "she has made too many to draw back at the last one. She sacrificed her adopted daughter; therefore she will sacrifice a young man, who is, after all, a comparative stranger to her."

"But Madeleine will never believe any harm of Prosper; therefore —"

"You talk like an idiot, my verdant nephew!"

Before the conversation was ended, the plan seemed feasible. The scoundrels made all their arrangements, and fixed the day for committing the crime. They selected the evening of the 27th of February, because Raoul knew that M. Fauvel would be dining out, and Madeleine was invited to a party on that evening. Unless something unforeseen should occur, Raoul knew that he would find Madame Fauvel alone at half-past eight o'clock.

"I will ask M. Fauvel this very day," said De Clameran, "to have my money ready for Tuesday."

"That is a very short notice, uncle," objected Raoul. "You know there are certain forms to be gone through, and he can claim a longer time wherein to pay it over."

"That is true, but our banker is proud of always being prepared to pay any amount of money, no matter how large; and if I say I am pressed, and would like to be accommodated on Tuesday, he will make a point of having it ready for me. Then, you must ask Prosper, as a personal favor to you, to have the money on hand at the opening of the bank."

Raoul once more examined the situation, to discover if there was not the grain of sand which so often becomes a mountain at the last moment. "Prosper and Gipsy are to be with me at Vésinet this evening," he said; "but I can not ask him



anything until I know the banker's answer. As soon as you have arranged matters with him, send me word by Manuel."

"I can't send Manuel, for an excellent reason—he has left me; but I can send another messenger."

On Monday evening, about six o'clock, Raoul felt so depressed and miserable that he asked himself whether, even if he wished it, he would be able to obey.

"Are you afraid?" asked De Clameran who had anxiously watched these inward struggles.

"Yes," replied Raoul, "yes; I have not your ferocious will, and I am afraid!"

"What, you, my pupil, my friend! It is not possible. Come, a little energy, one more stroke of our oars and we are in port. You are only nervous; come to dinner, and a bottle of Burgundy will soon set you right."

They were walking along the boulevards. De Clameran insisted upon their entering a restaurant, and having dinner in a private room. Vainly did he strive, however, to chase the gloom from his companion's pale face. Raoul sat listening, with a sullen frown, to his friend's jest about "swallowing the bitter pill gracefully." Urged by Louis, he drank two bottles of wine, in hopes that

intoxication would inspire him with courage to do the deed. But the drunkenness he sought came not; the wine proved false; at the bottom of the last bottle he found nothing but anger and disgust. The clock struck eight.

“The time has come,” said Louis firmly.

Raoul turned livid; his teeth chattered, and his limbs trembled so that he was unable to stand on his feet. “Oh, I cannot do it!” he cried in an agony of terror and rage.

De Clameran’s eyes flashed angrily at the prospect of all his plans being ruined at the last moment. But he dared not give way to his anger, for fear of exasperating Raoul, whom he knew to be anxious for an excuse to quarrel; so he violently pulled the bell-rope. A waiter appeared. “A bottle of port,” he said, “and a bottle of rum.”

When the waiter returned with the bottles, Louis filled a large glass with the two liquors mixed, and handed it to Raoul. “Drink this!” he said.

Raoul emptied the glass at a draught, and a faint color returned to his pale cheek. He arose, and striking the table with his fist, cried fiercely, “Come along!”

But before he had walked thirty yards, the fictitious energy inspired by drink deserted him. He clung to De Clameran’s arm, and was almost

dragged along, trembling like a criminal on his way to the scaffold.

“If I can once get him in the house,” thought Louis, who had studied Raoul and understood him; “once inside, his rôle will sustain him and carry him through, and all will be well. The cowardly baby! I would like to wring his neck!”

As they walked along he said: “Now, don’t forget our arrangements, and be careful how you enter the house; everything depends upon that. Have you the pistol in your pocket?”

“Yes, yes! Let me alone!”

It was well that De Clameran accompanied Raoul; for, when he got in sight of the door his courage gave way, and he longed to retreat. “A poor, helpless woman!” he groaned, “and an honest man who pressed my hand in friendship yesterday, to be cowardly ruined, betrayed by me! Ah, it is too base, too cowardly!”

“Come,” said De Clameran in a tone of contempt, “I thought you had more nerve. When a fellow has no more pluck than that, he should remain honest!”

Raoul overcame his weakness, and, silencing the clamors of his conscience, hurried to the house and pulled the bell. “Is Madame Fauvel at home?” he inquired of the servant who opened the door.

“Madame is alone in the little drawing-room,”  
was the reply.

And Raoul went up stairs.

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De Clameran’s injunction to Raoul was: “Be very cautious how you enter the room; your appearance must tell everything, and thus avoid impossible explanations.”

The recommendation was useless. The instant that Raoul entered the room, the sight of his pale, haggard face and wild eyes made Madame Fauvel exclaim: “Raoul! What misfortune has happened to you?”

The sound of her tender, affectionate voice acted like an electric shock upon the young bandit. He shook like a leaf. But at the same time his mind seemed to change. Louis was not mistaken in his estimate of his companion’s character. Raoul was on the stage, his part was to be played; his assurance returned to him; his cheating, lying nature assumed the ascendant. “This misfortune is the last I shall ever suffer, mother!”

Madame Fauvel rushed towards him, and, seizing his hand, gazed searchingly into his eyes, as if to read his very soul. “What is the matter? Raoul, my dear son, do tell me what troubles you.”

He gently pushed her from him. “The matter



is, my mother," he said, in a voice of heart-broken despair, "that I am unworthy of you, unworthy of my noble father! "

She shook her head as though to protest.

"Alas! " he said, "I know and judge myself. No one can reproach me for my infamous conduct more bitterly than does my own conscience. I am not naturally wicked, but only a miserable fool. At times I am like an insane man, and am not responsible for my actions. Ah, my dear mother, I would not be what I am, if you had watched over my childhood. But brought up among strangers, with no guide but my own evil passions, nothing to restrain me, no one to advise me, no one to love me, owning nothing, not even my stolen name, I am cursed with vanity and unbounded ambition. Poor, with no one to assist me but you, I have the tastes and vices of a millionaire's son. Alas! when I found you, the evil was done. Your affection, your maternal love, the only true happiness of my life, could not save me. I, who had suffered so much, endured so many privations, even the pangs of hunger, became spoiled by this new life of luxury and pleasure which you opened before me. I rushed headlong into extravagance, as a drunkard long deprived of drink seizes and drains to the dregs the first bottle in his reach."

Madame Fauvel listened, silent and terrified, to

these words of despair and remorse, which Raoul uttered with remarkable vehemence. She dared not interrupt him, but felt certain some dreadful piece of news was coming. Raoul continued in a sad, hopeless tone: "Yes; I have been a weak fool. Happiness was within my reach, and I had not the sense to stretch forth my hands and grasp it. I rejected a delicious reality to eagerly pursue a vain phantom. I, who ought to have spent my life at your feet, and daily striven to express my gratitude for your lavish kindness, have made you unhappy, destroyed your peace of mind, and, instead of being a blessing, I have been a curse ever since the first fatal day you welcomed me to your kind heart. Ah, unfeeling brute that I was, to squander upon creatures whom I despised, a fortune, of which each gold piece must have cost you a tear! Too late, too late! I find that with you was happiness."

He stopped, as if overcome by the consciousness of his evil deeds, and seemed about to burst into tears.

"It is never too late to repent, my son," murmured Madame Fauvel in comforting tones.

"Ah, if I only could!" cried Raoul; "but no, it is too late! Besides, can I tell how long my good resolutions will last? This is not the first time that I have condemned myself pitilessly."

Stinging remorse for each new fault made me swear to lead a better life, to sin no more. What was the result of these periodical repentances? At the first temptation I forgot my remorse and good resolutions. I am weak and mean-spirited, and you are not firm enough to govern my vacillating nature. While my intentions are good, my actions are villainous. The disproportion between my extravagant desires, and the means of gratifying them, it is too great for me to endure any longer. Who knows to what fearful lengths my unfortunate disposition may lead me? However, I shall know how to do myself justice! " he finally said with a reckless laugh.

Madame Fauvel was too cruelly agitated to follow Raoul's skilful transitions. "Speak!" she cried, "explain yourself; am I not your mother? Tell me the truth; I am ready to hear the worst."

He appeared to hesitate, as if afraid to crush his mother's heart by the terrible blow he was about to inflict. Then in a voice of gloomy despair he replied: "I am ruined!"

"Ruined!"

"Yes, ruined; and I have nothing more to expect or hope for. I am dishonored, and all through my own fault; no one is to blame but myself."

"Raoul!"

"It is the sad truth, my dear mother; but fear

nothing. I shall not trail in the dust the name which you bestowed upon me. I will at least have the courage not to survive my dishonor. Come, mother, don't pity me, or distress yourself; I am one of those miserable beings fated to find no peace save in the arms of death. I came into the world with misfortune stamped upon my brow. Was not my birth a shame and disgrace to you? Did not the memory of my existence haunt you day and night, filling your soul with remorse? And now, when I am restored to you after many years' separation, do I not prove to be a bitter curse instead of a blessing? "

"Ungrateful boy! Have I ever reproached you? "

"Never! Your poor Raoul will die blessing you, and with your beloved name upon his lips."

"Die? You die, my son? "

"It must be, my dear mother; honor compels it. I am condemned by judges from whose decision no appeal can be taken — my conscience and my will."

An hour ago, Madame Fauvel would have sworn that Raoul had made her suffer all the torments that a woman could endure; but now she felt that all her former troubles were nothing compared with her present agony. "What, then, have you been doing, Raoul? " she gasped.



“ Money was intrusted to me; I gambled, and lost it.”

“ Was it a very large sum? ”

“ No; but more than you can replace. My poor mother, have I not taken everything from you? Have you not given me your last jewel? ”

“ But M. de Clameran is rich. He placed his fortune at my disposal. I will order the carriage, and go to him.”

“ But M. de Clameran is away, and the money must be paid this evening, or I am lost. Alas! I have thought it all over and, although it is hard to die so young, still fate wills it so.” He pulled the pistol from his pocket, and, with a forced smile, added: “ This will settle everything.”

Madame Fauvel was too upset and frightened to reflect upon the horror of Raoul's behavior; and that these wild threats were a last expedient. Forgetful of the past, careless of the future, her every thought concentrated upon the present, she comprehended but one fact; that her son was about to commit suicide, and that she was powerless to prevent the fearful deed. “ Oh, wait a little while, my son! ” she cried. “ André will soon return home, and I will ask him to give me — how much did you lose? ”

“ Thirty thousand francs.”

“ You shall have them to-morrow.”

“ But I must have the money to-night.”

Madame Fauvel wrung her hands in despair. “ Oh! Why did you not come to me sooner, my son? Why did you not have confidence enough in me to come at once for help? This evening there is no one in the cashier’s office to open the safe, otherwise — ”

“ The safe! ” cried Raoul, “ but you know where the key is kept? ”

“ Yes, it is in the next room.”

“ Well! ” he exclaimed, with a bold look that caused Madame Fauvel to lower her eyes, and keep silent. “ Give me the key, mother,” he said in a tone of entreaty.

“ O Raoul, Raoul! ”

“ It is my life I am asking of you.”

These words decided her; she snatched up a candle, rushed into her bedroom, opened the secretary, and took out M. Fauvel’s key. But, when about to hand it to Raoul, her reason returned to her. “ No,” she stammered, “ no, it is impossible.” He did not insist, and seemed about to leave the room. “ True,” said he; “ then, mother, a last kiss.”

“ What could you do with the key, Raoul? ” asked Madame Fauvel, stopping him. “ You do not know the secret word.”

“ No; but I can try to open it.”

“ You know that money is never kept in the safe over night.”

“ Nevertheless, I can make the attempt. If I open the safe and find money in it, it will be a miracle, showing that Heaven has pitied my misfortunes.”

“ And if you are not successful, will you promise me to wait until to-morrow? ”

“ I swear it, by my father’s memory.”

“ Then take the key and follow me.”

Pale and trembling, Raoul and Madame Fauvel passed through the banker’s study, and down the narrow staircase leading to the offices and cashier’s room below. Raoul walked in front, holding the light, and the key of the safe. Madame Fauvel was convinced that it would be utterly impossible to open the safe, as the key was useless without the secret word and of course Raoul could not know what that was. Even granting that some chance had revealed the secret to him, he would find but little in the safe, since everything was deposited in the bank of France. The only anxiety she felt was, how Raoul would bear the disappointment, how she could calm his despair. She thought that she would gain time by letting Raoul make the attempt; and then, when he found he could not open the safe, he would keep his promise and wait until the next day. “ When he sees there

is no chance of success," she thought, "he will wait as he promised; and then to-morrow — to-morrow —"

What she would do on the morrow she knew not, she did not even ask herself. But in extreme situations the least delay inspires hope, as if a short respite meant sure salvation. The condemned man, at the last moment, begs for a reprieve of a day, an hour, a few seconds. Raoul was about to kill himself; his mother prayed to God to grant her one night; as if in this short space of time some unexpected relief would come to end her misery. They reached Prosper's office, and Raoul placed the lamp on a high stool so that it lighted the whole room. He had then recovered all his coolness, or rather that mechanical precision of movement, almost independent of will, which men accustomed to peril always find ready in time of need. Rapidly, with the dexterity of experience, he slipped the buttons on the five letters composing the name of G,i,p,s,y. His features during this short operation, expressed the most intense anxiety. He was fearful that the awful energy he had shown might after all be of no use; perhaps the safe would remain closed, perhaps the money would not be there. Prosper might have changed the word, or neglected to have the money in the safe. Madame Fauvel saw these visible apprehensions with alarm.



She read in his eyes that wild hope of a man who, passionately desiring an object, ends by persuading himself that his own will suffices to overcome all obstacles. Having often been present when Prosper was preparing to leave his office, Raoul had fifty times seen him move the buttons, and lock the safe, just before the bank closed. Indeed, having a practical turn of mind, and an eye to the future, he had even turned the key in the lock on more than one occasion. He inserted the key softly, and turned it round once, pushed it farther in, and turned it a second time; then thrust it right in with a jerk, and turned it again. His heart beat so loudly that Madame Fauvel could hear its throbs. The word had not been changed; the safe opened. Raoul and his mother simultaneously uttered a cry — she of terror, he of triumph.

“Shut it again!” exclaimed Madame Fauvel, frightened at the incomprehensible result of Raoul’s attempt; “leave it alone, come away.”

And, half frenzied, she clung to his arm, and pulled him away so abruptly, that the key was dragged from the lock, and, slipping along the glossy varnish of the safe-door made a deep, long scratch. But at a glance the young man had perceived three rolls of bank notes on an upper shelf. He snatched them up with his left hand, and slipped them inside his vest. Exhausted by the

effort she had made, Madame Fauvel dropped his arm, and, almost fainting with emotion, leaned against the back of a chair.

"Have mercy, Raoul!" she moaned. "I implore you to put back that money, and I solemnly swear I will give you twice as much to-morrow. O my son, have pity upon your unhappy mother!"

He paid no attention to these words of entreaty, but carefully examined the scratch on the safe. This trace of the robbery was very visible, and alarmed him.

"At least you will not take all," said Madame Fauvel; "just keep enough to save yourself, and put back the rest."

"What good would that do? What I take will be missed just the same."

"Oh, no! not at all. I can account to André; I will tell him I had a pressing need for some money, and opened the safe to get it."

In the mean time Raoul had carefully closed the safe. "Come, mother, let us go back to the sitting-room. A servant might go there to look for you, and be astonished at our absence."

Raoul's cruel indifference and cold calculations at such a moment filled Madame Fauvel with indignation. She thought that she had still some influence over her son — that her prayers and tears would have some effect upon his heart. "Let them

be astonished," she cried; "let them come here and find us. Then there will be an end to all this. André will drive me from his house like a worthless creature, but I will not sacrifice the innocent. Prosper will be accused of this to-morrow. De Clameran has taken from him the woman he loved, and now you would deprive him of his honor! I will not allow it."

She spoke so loud and so angrily that Raoul was alarmed. He knew that one of the office-men passed the night in a room close by, and although it was still early in the evening he might be already in bed, and listening to them. "Come up stairs," he said seizing Madame Fauvel's arm.

But she clung to the table, and refused to move a step. "I have been cowardly enough to sacrifice Madeleine," she said, "but I will not ruin Prosper."

Raoul had an argument in reserve which he knew would make Madame Fauvel submit to his will. "Now, really," he said, with a cynical laugh, "do you pretend that you do not know Prosper and I arranged this little affair together, and that he is waiting to share the booty? "

"It is impossible! "

"What! Do you suppose, then, that chance alone told me the word, and placed the money in the safe? "

"Prosper is honest."

“Of course he is, and so am I too. The only thing is, that we both need money.”

“You lie.”

“No, dear mother. Madeleine dismissed Prosper, and the poor fellow has to console himself for her cruelty, and this sort of consolation is expensive.”

He took up the lamp, and gently but firmly led Madame Fauvel towards the staircase. She mechanically suffered him to do so, more bewildered by what she had just heard, than she was at the opening of the safe-door. “What!” she gasped; “can Prosper be a thief?” She began to think herself the victim of a terrible nightmare, and that, when she awoke, her mind would be relieved of this intolerable torture. She helplessly clung to Raoul’s arm as he assisted her up the little narrow staircase.

“You must put the key back in the secretary,” said Raoul, as soon as they were in the bedroom again.

But she did not seem to hear him; so he went and put it in the place from which he had seen her take it. He then led, or rather carried, Madame Fauvel into the little sitting-room, and placed her in an easy-chair. The set expressionless look of the wretched woman’s eyes, and her dazed manner, frightened Raoul, who thought that she was going out of her mind.



Raoul hurried away to De Clameran, who sprang to his feet, ghastly pale, and with great difficulty gasped out, "Well? "

"It is done, uncle, thanks to you; and I am now the greatest villain on the face of the earth." He unbuttoned his vest, and, pulling out the three bundles of bank-notes, angrily dashed them upon the table, adding, in a tone of hate and contempt: "Now I hope you are satisfied. This is the price of the happiness, honor, and perhaps the life, of three persons."

De Clameran paid no attention to these angry words. With feverish eagerness he seized the notes, and held them in his hands as if to convince himself of the reality of success. "Now Madeleine is mine," he cried, excitedly.

Raoul said nothing. This exhibition of joy, after the scene in which he had just been an actor disgusted and humiliated him. Louis misinterpreted his silence, and asked gayly: "Did you have much difficulty? "

"I forbid you ever to allude to this evening's work," cried Raoul fiercely. "Do you hear me? I wish to forget it."

De Clameran shrugged his shoulders at this outburst of anger, and said, in a bantering tone: "Just as you please, my handsome nephew; forget it if you like. I rather think, though you will not

refuse to accept these three hundred and fifty thousands francs as a slight memento. Take them — they are yours.”

This generosity seemed neither to surprise nor satisfy Raoul. “According to our agreement,” he said sullenly, “I was to have much more than this.”

“Of course; this is only on account.”

“And when am I to have the rest, if you please?”

“The day I marry Madeleine, and not before, my boy. You are too valuable an assistant to lose at present; and you know that, though I don’t distrust you, I am not altogether sure of your sincere affection for me.”

Raoul reflected that to commit a crime, and not profit by it, would be the height of absurdity. He had returned with the intention of breaking off all connection with De Clameran; but he now determined that he would not abandon his accomplice until there was nothing more to get out of him. “Very well,” he said, “I accept this on account; but remember, I will never do another piece of work like this of to-night.”

De Clameran burst into a loud laugh, and replied: “That is sensible; now that you are rich, you can afford to be honest. Set your conscience at rest, for I promise you I will require nothing more of you save a few trifling services. You can

retire behind the scenes now, while I appear upon the stage."

\* \* \* \* \*

For more than an hour after Raoul's departure, Madame Fauvel remained in a state of torpor bordering upon unconsciousness. Gradually, however, she recovered her senses sufficiently to comprehend the horrors of her present situation; and with the faculty of thought, that of suffering returned. The dreadful scene in which she had taken part was still before her affrighted vision; all the attending circumstances, unnoticed at the time, now struck her forcibly. She saw that she had been the dupe of a shameful conspiracy; that Raoul had tortured her with cold-blooded cruelty, had taken advantage of her tenderness, and played with her sufferings. But had Prosper anything to do with the robbery? This Madame Fauvel had no way of finding out. Ah, Raoul knew how the blow would strike when he accused his friend. He knew that she would end by believing in the cashier's complicity. Knowing that Madeleine's lover was leading a life of extravagance and dissipation, she thought it very likely he had, from sheer desperation, resorted to this bold step to pay his debts; her blind affection, moreover, made her anxious to attribute the first idea of crime to any one, rather than to her son. She had heard that Pros-

per was supporting one of those worthless creatures whose extravagance impoverishes men, and whose evil influence perverts their natures. When a young man is thus degraded, will he stop at any sin or crime? Alas! Madame Fauvel knew, from her own sad experience, to what depths even one fault can lead.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the following day De Clameran to sustain his part in the plot called on Mme. Fauvel, and in the presence of Madeleine, he slowly drew from his pocket several bundles of bank notes, and laid them on the mantle-piece. "Raoul stole three hundred and fifty thousand francs," he said; "I return the same amount. It is more than half my fortune. Willingly would I give the rest to insure this being his last crime."

Too inexperienced to penetrate De Clameran's bold, and yet simple plan, Madeleine was dumb with astonishment; all her calculations were upset.

Madame Fauvel, on the contrary, accepted this restitution as salvation sent from heaven, "Oh, thanks, sir, thanks!" she cried, gratefully clasping De Clameran's hand in hers; "you are goodness itself!"

Louis' eyes lit up with pleasure. But he rejoiced too soon. A minute's reflection brought back all of Madeleine's distrust. She thought this generos-



ity unnatural in a man whom she considered incapable of noble sentiment, and at once concluded that it must conceal some snare beneath. "What are we to do with this money?" she demanded.

"Restore it to M. Fauvel, mademoiselle."

"We restore it, sir, and how? Restoring the money is denouncing Raoul, and ruining my aunt. Take back your money, sir."

De Clameran was too shrewd to insist; he took up the money and seemed about to leave.

"I comprehend your refusal, mademoiselle, and must find another way of accomplishing my wish. But, before retiring, let me say that your injustice pains me deeply. After the promise you made me, I had reason to hope for a kinder welcome."

"I will keep my promise, sir, but not until you have furnished security."

"Security! What security? Pray explain yourself."

"Something to protect my aunt against Raoul after my — marriage. What is my dowry to a man who squanders a hundred thousand francs in four months? We are making a bargain; I give you my hand in exchange for my aunt's life and honor, and of course you must give me some security for the performance of your promise."

"Oh! I will give you ample securities," exclaimed De Clameran, "such as will quiet all your

suspicious doubts of my good faith. Alas! you will not believe in my devotion; what shall I do to convince you of its sincerity? Shall I try to save M. Bertomy? ”

“ Thanks for the offer, sir,” replied Madeleine disdainfully; “ if Prosper is guilty, let him be punished by the law; if he is innocent, God will protect him.”

Madeleine and her aunt rose from their seats to signify that the interview was over. De Clam-eran bowed, and left the room. “ What pride! What determination! The idea of her demanding security of me! ” he said to himself as he slowly walked away. “ But the proud girl shall be humbled yet. She is so beautiful! and, if I did not so madly love her — well! so much the worse for Raoul! ”

All winter, Madame Fauvel and Madeleine had declined invitations, but they found it necessary to attend the Jandidier ball, and they had no jewels. Neither of them could go to the ball without jewelry; and every jewel they owned had been taken by Raoul, and pawned, and he had the tickets. After thinking the matter over, Madeleine decided to ask Raoul to devote some of the stolen money to redeeming the jewels he had forced from his mother. She informed her aunt of her plan, saying: “ Make an appointment with Raoul; he

will not dare to refuse you; and I will go in your stead." And, two days after, the courageous girl took a cab, and, regardless of the inclement weather, went to Vésinet. She had no idea, then, that M. Verduret and Prosper were following close behind her, and that they witnessed her interview from the top of a ladder. Her bold step, however, was fruitless. Raoul swore that he had shared with Prosper; that his own half was spent, and that he was quite without money. He even refused to give up the pawn tickets; and Madeleine had to insist most energetically before she could induce him to give up four or five trifling articles that were absolutely indispensable. De Clameran had ordered him to refuse, because he hoped that in their distress they would apply to him for help. Raoul had obeyed, but only after a violent altercation witnessed by De Clameran's new valet, Joseph Dubois. The accomplices were at that time on very bad terms together. The marquis was seeking a safe means of getting rid of Raoul; and the young scamp had a sort of presentiment of his uncle's unfriendly intentions. Nothing but the certainty of impending danger could reconcile them; and this was revealed to them at the Jandidier ball. Who was the mysterious mountebank that had indulged in such transparent allusions to Madame Fauvel's private troubles, and then said

with threatening significance to Louis: "I was your brother Gaston's friend!"

Who he was, where he came from, they could not imagine; but they clearly saw that he was a dangerous enemy, and forthwith attempted to assassinate him upon his leaving the ball. Having followed him and then having lost him, they became alarmed: "We cannot be too guarded in our conduct," whispered De Clameran; "we shall know only too soon who he is."

Once more Raoul tried to induce him to give up his project of marrying Madeleine. "Never!" he exclaimed; "I will marry her, or perish!"

They thought that, now they were warned, the danger of their being caught was lessened. But they did not know the sort of man who was on their track.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such are the facts that, with an almost incredible talent for investigation, had been collected and prepared by M. Verduret, the stout man with the jovial face who had taken Prosper under his protection. Reaching Paris at nine o'clock at night, not by the Lyons train as he had announced, but by the Orleans one, M. Verduret had hastened to the Hotel of the Grand Archangel, where he had found the cashier impatiently expecting him.

"You are about to hear something extraordi-



nary," he had said to Prosper, "and you will see how far back one has to seek in the past, for the primary causes of a crime. All things are linked together and dependent upon each other in this world of ours. If Gaston de Clameran had not entered a little café at Tarascon to play a game of billiards twenty years ago, your safe would not have been robbed three weeks back. Valentine de La Verberie is punished in 1866 for the murders committed for her sake in 1840. Nothing is ever lost or forgotten. Listen."

M. Verduret did not finish his report until four o'clock in the morning; then he exclaimed triumphantly: "And now they are on their guard; they are wary rascals too; but I can laugh at their efforts, for I have them safe. Before a week is over, Prosper, your innocence will be recognized by every one. I promised your father this."

"Is it possible?" murmured Prosper in a dazed way; "is it possible?"

"What?"

"All this you have just told me."

M. Verduret bounded like a man little accustomed to have the accuracy of his information doubted. "Is it possible, indeed?" he cried; "but it is truth itself, truth founded on fact and exposed in all its impressiveness!"

"But how can such rascalities take place in Paris, in our very midst, without —"

“ Ah! ” interrupted the stout man, “ you are young, my friend! Crimes worse than this happen, and you know nothing of them. You think the horrors of the assize court are the only ones. Pooh! You only read in the ‘ Gazette des Tribunaux ’ of the bloody melodramas of life, where the actors, low-born villains, are as cowardly as the knife, or as stupid as the poison they use. It is at the family fireside, often under shelter of the law itself, that the real tragedies of life are enacted; in these days traitors wear gloves, scoundrels cloak themselves in public esteem, and their victims die broken-hearted, but smiling to the last. What I have just related to you is almost an every-day occurrence; and yet you profess astonishment.”

“ I can’t help wondering how you discovered all this tissue of crime.”

“ Ah, that is the point! ” said M. Verduret, with a self-satisfied smile. “ When I undertake a task, I devote my whole attention to it. Now, make a note of this: When a man of ordinary intelligence concentrates his thoughts and energies upon the attainment of an object, he is almost always certain to ultimately obtain success. Besides that, I have my own means of working up a case.”

“ Still I don’t see what grounds you had to go upon.”

“ To be sure, one needs some light to guide one in a dark affair like this. But the fire in De Clam-

eran's eye at the mention of Gaston's name ignited my lantern. From that moment I walked straight to the solution of the mystery, as to a beacon."

Prosper's eager, questioning looks showed that he would like to know the secret of his protector's wonderful penetration, and at the same time he more thoroughly convinced that what he had heard was all true — that his innocence would be clearly proved.

"Now confess," cried M. Verduret, "you would give something to know how I discovered the truth."

M. Verduret enjoyed Prosper's bewilderment. To be sure, he was neither a good judge nor a distinguished amateur; but sincere admiration is always flattering, no matter whence it comes. "Well," he replied, "I will explain my system. There is nothing marvellous about it as you will soon see. We worked together to find the solution of the problem, so you know my reason for suspecting De Clameran as the prime mover in the robbery. As soon as I had arrived at this conclusion my task was easy. You want to know what I did? I placed trustworthy people to watch the parties in whom I was most interested. Joseph Dubois took charge of De Clameran, and Nina Gipsy never lost sight of Madame Fauvel and her niece."

"I know, and I cannot comprehend how Nina ever consented to this service."

"That is my secret," replied M. Verduret. "Having the assistance of good eyes and quick ears on the spot, I went to Beaucaire to inquire into the past, so as to link it with what I was sure to learn of the present. The next day I was at Clameran; and the first step I took was to find the son of Jean, the old valet. An honest fellow he is, too; open and simple as nature herself; and he at once guessed that I wanted to purchase some madder."

"Madder?" said Prosper with a puzzled look.

"Of course I wanted to buy his madder. I did not appear to him as I do to you now. He had madder for sale, that was evident; so we began to bargain about the price. The debate lasted almost all day, during which time we drank a dozen bottles of wine. About supper time, Jean, the younger, was as drunk as a barrel, and I had purchased nine hundred francs' worth of madder which your father will sell for me." Prosper looked so astonished that M. Verduret laughed heartily. "I risked nine hundred francs," he continued, "but thread by thread I gathered the whole history of the De Clamerans, Gaston's love affair, his flight, and the stumbling of the horse ridden by Louis. I found also that about a year ago Louis returned



and sold the château to a man named Fougeroux, whose wife, Mihonne, had a secret interview with Louis the day of the purchase. I went to see Mihonne. Poor woman! her rascally husband has pounded nearly all the sense out of her; she is almost idiotic. I convinced her that I came from some De Clameran or other, and she at once related to me everything she knew." The apparent simplicity of this mode of investigation confounded Prosper. "From that time," continued M. Verduret, "the skein began to disentangle; I held the principal thread. I now set about finding out what had become of Gaston. Lafourcade, who is a friend of your father, informed me that he bought an iron foundry at Oloron, had settled there, and died soon after."

"You are certainly indefatigable!" said Prosper.

"No, but I always strike when the iron is hot. At Oloron, I met Manuel, who had gone there to make a little visit before returning to Spain. From him I obtained a complete history of Gaston's life, and all the particulars of his death. Manuel also told me of Louis' visit; and an inn keeper described a young workman who was there at the same time, whom I at once recognized as Raoul."

"But how did you know of all the conversation between the villains?" asked Prosper.

"You evidently think I have been drawing

upon my imagination. You will soon think the contrary. While I was at work in Oloron, my assistants here did not sit with their hands in their pockets. Mutually distrustful, De Clameran and Raoul preserved all the letters they received from each other. Joseph Dubois copied most of them, and had the more important ones photographed, and forwarded the copies to me. Nina spent her time listening at all the doors, and sent me a faithful report of everything she heard. Finally, I have at the Fauvels' another means of investigation, which I will reveal to you later."

"I understand it now," murmured Prosper.

"And what have you been doing during my absence, my young friend?" asked M. Verduret.

At this question Prosper turned crimson. But he knew that it would never do to keep silent about his imprudent step. "Alas!" he stammered, "I read in a newspaper that De Clameran was about to marry Madeleine; and I acted like a fool."

"What did you do?" inquired M. Verduret anxiously.

"I sent M. Fauvel an anonymous letter, in which I insinuated that his wife was in love with Raoul —"

M. Verduret here brought his clenched fist down upon the little table near which he sat, and broke it. "Wretched man!" he cried, "you have prob-

ably ruined everything." A great change came over him. His usually jovial face assumed a menacing expression. He rose from his seat, and strode up and down the room, oblivious of the lodgers on the floor below. "But you must be a baby," added he to the dismayed Prosper, "an idiot, or, worse than that, a fool."

"Sir! "

"Here you are drowning; a brave man springs into the water after you, and just as he is on the point of saving you, you cling to his feet to prevent his swimming! What did I tell you to do? "

"Well! "

The consciousness of having done a foolish thing made Prosper as frightened as a schoolboy, accused by his teacher of playing truant. "It was night, sir," he said, "and, having a violent headache, I took a walk along the quays. I thought there would be no harm in my entering a café; I took up a paper and read the dreadful announcement."

"Was it not settled that you should have perfect confidence in me? "

"You were not here, sir; this announcement had quite upset me; you were far away, and might have been surprised by an unexpected — "

"Nothing is unexpected except to a fool! " declared M. Verduret peremptorily. "To write an

anonymous letter! Do you know to what you expose me? You are the cause of my perhaps breaking a sacred promise made to one of the few persons whom I highly esteem among my fellow beings. I shall be looked upon as a cheat, a dastard, I, who — ” He stopped abruptly, as if afraid of saying too much, and it was only after some minutes that, having become calm again, he resumed: “It is no use crying over what is done. We must try and get out of the mess somehow. When and where did you post this letter? ”

“Last night, in the Rue du Cardinal Lemoine. It hardly reached the bottom of the box before I regretted having written it.”

“Your regrets should have come sooner. What time was it? ”

“About ten o’clock.”

“Then your sweet little letter must have reached M. Fauvel this morning with his other correspondence; probably he was alone in his study when he opened and read it.”

“It is not probable, it is certain.”

“Can you recall the exact words of your letter? Stop and think, for it is very important that I should know.”

“Oh, it is unnecessary for me to reflect. I remember the letter as if I had just written it.” And he repeated almost verbatim what he had written.



M. Verduret listened most attentively with a perplexed frown upon his face. "That is a formidable anonymous letter," he murmured, "to come from a person who does not deal in such things. It insinuates everything without specifying a single thing; it is vague, jeering, and treacherous. Repeat it to me." Prosper obeyed, and his second version did not vary from the first in a single word. "Nothing could be more alarming than that allusion to the cashier," said the stout man, repeating the words after Prosper. "The question, 'Is it also he who has stolen Madame Fauvel's diamonds?' is simply horrible! What could be more exasperating than the sarcastic advice, 'In your place, I would not have any public scandal, but would watch my wife?' The effect of your letter must have been terrible," he added thoughtfully, as he stood with folded arms in front of Prosper. "M. Fauvel is quick-tempered, is he not? "

"He has a very violent temper."

"Then the mischief is perhaps not irreparable."

"What! do you suppose — "

"I think that an impulsive man is afraid of himself, and seldom carries out his first intentions. That is our only chance. If, upon the receipt of your bomb-shell, M. Fauvel, unable to restrain himself, rushed into his wife's room, exclaiming, 'Where are your diamonds?' our plans are done

for. I know Madame Fauvel, she will confess all."

"Why would this be so disastrous?"

"Because, the moment Madame Fauvel opens her lips to her husband, our birds will take flight."

Prosper had never thought of this eventuality.

"Then, again," continued M. Verduret, "it would deeply distress another person."

"Any one whom I know?"

"Yes, my friend, and very well too. I should certainly be vexed to the last degree, if these two rascals escape without my being thoroughly informed about them."

"It seems to me that you know sufficient."

M. Verduret shrugged his shoulders, and asked: "Did you not perceive any gaps in my narrative?"

"Not one."

"That is because you don't know how to listen. In the first place, did Louis de Clameran poison his brother or not?"

"Yes; I am sure of it, from what you tell me."

"There you are! You are much more certain, young man, than I am. Your opinion is mine; but what decisive proof have we? None. I skilfully questioned Dr. C. He has not the shadow of a suspicion; and Dr. C. is no quack; he is a learned and observing man of high standing. What poisons produce the effects described? I know of none; and yet I have studied all sorts of poisons,

from the digitalis used by La Pommeraye to Madame Sauvresy's aconite."

"The death took place so opportunely — "

"That anybody would suspect foul play. That is true; but chance is sometimes a wonderful accomplice in crime. In the second place, I know nothing of Raoul's antecedents."

"Is information on that point necessary? "

"Indispensable, my friend; but we will soon know something. I have sent one of my men — excuse me, I mean one of my friends — who is very expert, M. Pâlot; and he writes that he is on the track. I am interested in the history of this sentimental, skeptical young rascal. I have an idea that, had he not known De Clameran, he might have been a brave honest sort of youth."

Prosper was no longer listening. M. Verduret's words had inspired him with confidence. Already he saw the guilty men arraigned before the bar of justice; and enjoyed, in anticipation, this assize-court drama, where he would be publicly righted, after having been so openly dishonored. More than that, he now understood Madeleine, her strange conduct at the dressmaker's was explained, and he knew that she had never ceased to love him. This certainty of future happiness restored all the self-possession that had deserted him the day he found the safe robbed. For the first time

he was astonished at the peculiarity of his situation. Prosper had at first only been surprised at the protection of M. Verduret and the extent of his investigations; now he asked himself, what could have been his friend's motives for acting thus? In a word, what price did he expect for this sacrifice of time and labor? His anxiety was so great on this point that he suddenly exclaimed: "You have no longer the right, sir, to preserve your incognito with me. When you have saved the honor and life of a man, you should at least let him know whom he has to thank."

"Oh!" said M. Verduret smilingly; "you are not out of the mess yet. You are not married either; so you must, for a few days longer, have patience and faith." The clock struck six. "Good heavens!" he added. "Can it be six o'clock? I did hope to have a good night's rest, but this is no time for sleeping." He went on to the landing, and leaning over the balusters, called: "Madame Alexandre! I say, Madame Alexandre!"

The hostess of the Grand Archangel, the portly wife of Fanferlot, the Squirrel, had evidently not been to bed. This fact struck Prosper. She appeared, obsequious, smiling, and eager to please. "What do you require, gentlemen?" she inquired.

"You can send me your — Joseph Dubois, and also Palmyre, as soon as possible. Have them



sent for at once, and let me know when they arrive. I will take a little rest in the meantime."

As soon as Madame Alexandre left the room, the stout man unceremoniously threw himself on the bed. "You have no objection, I suppose," he said to Prosper. In five minutes he was fast asleep; and Prosper, more perplexed than ever, seated himself in an easy-chair and wondered who this strange man could be. About nine o'clock some one tapped timidly at the door. Slight as the noise was, it aroused M. Verduret, who sprang up, and called out: "Who is there?" But Prosper had already opened the door. Joseph Dubois, the Marquis de Clameran's valet, entered. M. Verduret's assistant was breathless from running; and his little eyes were more restless than ever.

"Well, master, I am glad to see you once more," he cried. "Now you can tell me what to do; I have been perfectly lost during your absence, and have felt like a puppet with a broken string."

"What! you allow yourself to be disconcerted like that?"

"Bless me! I think I had cause for alarm when I could not find you anywhere. Yesterday afternoon I sent you three telegrams, to the addresses you gave me, at Lyons, Beaucaire, and Oloron, and received no answer. I was almost going crazy when your message reached me just now."

“ Things are getting warm, then.”

“ Warm! They are burning! The place is too hot to hold me any longer.”

Whilst speaking, M. Verduret occupied himself in repairing his toilet, which had become disarranged during his sleep. When he had finished, he threw himself in an easy-chair, and said to Joseph Dubois, who remained respectfully standing, cap in hand, like a soldier awaiting orders: “ Explain yourself, my lad, and quickly, if you please; no long phrases.”

“ It is just this, sir. I don’t know what your plans are, or what means you have of carrying them out; but you must wind up this affair and strike your final blow very quickly.”

“ That is your opinion, Master Joseph! ”

“ Yes, master, because if you wait any longer, good-by to our covey; you will only find an empty cage, and the birds flown. You smile? Yes, I know you are clever, and can accomplish anything; but they are cunning blades, and as slippery as eels. They know, too, that they are watched.”

“ The devil they do! ” cried M. Verduret. “ Some one must have blundered.”

“ Oh! nobody has done anything wrong,” replied Joseph. “ You know that they suspected something long ago. They gave you a proof of it, the night of the fancy dress ball; I mean that ugly

cut on your arm. Ever since they have always slept with one eye open. They were feeling easier, however, when all of a sudden, yesterday, they began to smell a rat! ”

“ Was that why you sent me those telegrams? ”

“ Of course. Now listen: yesterday morning when my master got up, about ten o'clock, he took it into his head to arrange the papers in his desk; which, by the way, has a disgusting lock which has given me a deal of trouble. Meanwhile, I pretended to be making up the fire, so as to remain in the room to watch him. That man has a Yankee's eye! At the first glance he saw, or rather divined, that his sheets had been meddled with; he turned as white as a sheet, and swore an oath, such an oath! ”

“ Never mind the oath; go on.”

“ Well, how he discovered his letters had been touched I can't imagine. You know how careful I am. I had put everything back in its place just as I found it. To make sure he was not mistaken, the marquis picks up each paper, one at a time, turns it over, and smells it. I was just longing to offer him a microscope, when all of a sudden he sprang up, and kicking his chair to the other end of the room, flew at me in a fury. ‘ Somebody has been at my papers,’ he shrieked; ‘ this letter has been photographed! ’ B-r-r-r! I am not a coward, but

I can tell you that my heart stood perfectly still; I saw myself dead, cut into mince-meat; and I even said to myself, 'Fanfer — excuse me — Du-bois, my friend, you are done for.' And I thought of Madame Alexandre."

M. Verduret was buried in thought, and paid no attention to the worthy Joseph's analysis of his personal sensations. "What happened next?" he asked after a few minutes.

"Why, I was needlessly frightened after all. The rascal did not dare to touch me. To be sure, I had taken the precaution to get out of his reach; we talked with a large table between us. While wondering what could have enabled him to discover the secret, I defended myself with virtuous indignation. I said: 'It cannot be; Monsieur the Marquis is mistaken. Who would dare touch his papers?' Bah! Instead of listening to me, he flourished an open letter, saying: 'This letter has been photographed! here is proof of it!' and he pointed to a little yellow spot on the paper, shrieking out: 'Look! Smell! It is —' I forget the name he called it, but some acid used by photographers."

"I know, I know," said M. Verduret; "go on; what next?"

"Then we had a scene; such a scene! He ended by seizing me by the coat collar, and shaking me



like a plum tree, to make me tell him who I am, who I know, and where I came from. As if I know, myself! I was obliged to account for every minute of my time since I had been in his service. He was born to be an investigating magistrate. Then he sent for the hotel waiter, who attends to his rooms, and questioned him closely, but in English, so that I could not understand. After awhile he cooled down, and when the waiter was gone, presented me with twenty francs, saying: 'I am sorry I was so hasty with you; you are too stupid to have been guilty.' "

"He said that, did he? "

"He used those very words to my face, master."

"And you think he meant what he said? "

"Certainly I do."

The stout man smiled, and whistled in a way that showed that he had a different opinion. "If you think that," he said, "De Clameran was right. You are not up to much."

It was easy to see that Joseph Dubois was anxious to give his grounds for his opinion, but dared not. "I suppose I am stupid, if you think so," he replied humbly. "Well, after he had done blustering about the letters, the marquis dressed and went out. He would not take his carriage, but hired a cab at the hotel door. I thought he would perhaps disappear forever; but I was mistaken. About

five o'clock he returned as gay as a lark. During his absence, I telegraphed to you."

"What! did you not follow him?"

"No; but one of our friends did, and this friend gave me a report of the dandy's movements. First he went to a broker's, then to a bank and a discount office. It is evident he is a man of capital. I expect he intends to go on a little trip somewhere."

"Is that all he did?"

"That is all; yes. But I must tell you that the rascals tried to get Mademoiselle Palmyre shut up, 'administratively,' you understand. Fortunately, you had anticipated something of the kind, and given orders so as to prevent it. But for you she would now be in prison." Joseph left off speaking, and looked up at the ceiling by way of trying to remember whether he had not something more to say. Finding nothing, he added: "That is all. I rather think M. Patrigent will rub his hands with delight when I take him my report. He has no idea of the facts collected to swell the size of his File No. 113."

There was a long silence. Joseph was right in supposing that the crisis had come. M. Verduret was arranging his plan of battle while waiting for the report of Nina — now Palmyre — upon which depended his point of attack.

But Joseph Dubois was restless and uneasy. "What am I to do now, master?" he asked.

"Return to the hotel; probably your master has noticed your absence; but he will say nothing about it, so continue —"

Here an exclamation from Prosper, who was standing near the window, interrupted M. Verduret. "What is the matter?" he inquired.

"De Clameran is there!" replied Prosper.

M. Verduret and Joseph ran to the window. "Where is he?" they asked.

"There, at the corner of the bridge, behind the orange woman's stall."

Prosper was right. It was the noble Marquis de Clameran, who, hid behind the stall, was watching for his servant to come out of the Grand Archangel. At first the quick-sighted Verduret had some doubt whether it was the marquis, who, being skilled in these hazardous expeditions, managed to conceal himself almost entirely. But a moment came when, elbowed by the pressing crowd, he was obliged to get off the pavement in full view of the window.

"Now you see I was right!" cried the cashier.

"Well," murmured Joseph, convinced, "I am amazed!"

M. Verduret seemed not in the least surprised, but quietly said: "The hunter is now being hunted."

Well, my boy, do you still think that your noble master was duped by your pretended injured innocence? ”

“ You stated the contrary, sir,” replied Joseph in a humble tone; “ and a statement from you is more convincing than all the proofs in the world.”

“ This pretended outburst of rage was premeditated on the part of your noble master. Knowing that he is being tracked, he naturally wishes to discover who his adversaries are. You can imagine how uncomfortable he must be whilst in this uncertainty. Perhaps he thinks his pursuers are some of his old accomplices, who, being hungry, want a piece of his cake. He will remain there until you go out; then he will come in to inquire who you are.”

“ But I can leave without his seeing me.”

“ Yes, I know. You will climb the little wall separating the hotel from the wine merchant’s yard, and keep along the stationer’s area, until you reach the Rue de la Huchette.”

Poor Joseph looked as if he had just received a bucket of ice water upon his head. “ Exactly the way I was going,” he gasped out. “ I heard that you knew all the houses in Paris, and it certainly must be so.”

The stout man made no reply to Joseph’s admiring remarks. He was wondering what advantage he



could reap from De Clameran's behavior. As to the cashier, he listened wonderingly, watching these strangers, who without any apparent reason, seemed determined to win the difficult game in which his honor, his happiness, and perhaps even his life, were the stake.

"I have another idea," said Joseph after deep thought.

"What is it? "

"I can walk quietly out of the front door, and with my hands in my pockets stroll slowly back to the Hôtel du Louvre."

"And then? "

"Well! then, De Clameran will come in and question Madame Alexandre, whom you can instruct beforehand; and she is smart enough to put any joker off the track! "

"Bad plan! " pronounced M. Verduret decidedly; "a scamp so compromised as De Clameran is not easily taken in; it will be impossible to reassure him." His mind was made up; for in a brief tone of authority, which admitted of no contradiction, he added: "I have a better plan. Has De Clameran, since he found out that his papers had been touched, seen De Lagors? "

"No, sir."

"Perhaps he has written to him? "

"I'll bet you my head he has not. Having your

orders to watch his correspondence, I invented a little system which informs me every time he touches a pen; during the last twenty-four hours the pens have not been touched."

"De Clameran went out yesterday afternoon."

"But the man who followed him says he wrote nothing on the way."

"Then we have time yet!" cried Verduret. "Be quick! I give you fifteen minutes to make yourself another head; you know the sort; I will watch the rascal until you are ready."

The delighted Joseph disappeared in a twinkling, and Prosper and M. Verduret remained at the window observing De Clameran, who, according to the movements of the crowd, kept disappearing and reappearing, but was evidently determined not to quit his post until he had obtained the information he sought.

"Why do you devote yourself exclusively to the marquis?" asked Prosper.

"Because, my friend," replied M. Verduret, "because — that is my business, and not yours."

Joseph Dubois had been granted a quarter of an hour in which to metamorphose himself; before ten minutes had elapsed he reappeared. The dandified coachman with whiskers, red vest, and foppish manners, was replaced by a sinister-looking individual, whose very appearance was enough

to scare any rogue. His black cravat twisted round a paper collar, and ornamented by an imitation diamond pin; his black frock coat buttoned up to the chin; his greasy hat and shiny boots and heavy cane — revealed the myrmidon of the Rue de Jérusalem, as plainly as the uniform denotes the soldier. Joseph Dubois had vanished, and from his livery, phoenix-like and triumphant, rose the radiant Fanferlot, surnamed the Squirrel.

When he entered the room, Prosper uttered a cry of surprise, almost of terror. He recognized the man who had assisted the commissary of police in his investigation at the bank on the day of the robbery.

M. Verduret examined his follower with a satisfied look, and said: "Not bad! There is enough of the police court air about you to alarm even an honest man. You understand me perfectly."

Fanferlot was transported with delight at this compliment. "What must I do now, chief?" he inquired.

"Nothing difficult for a smart man; but remember, upon the precision of our movements depends the success of my plan. Before occupying myself with De Lagors, I wish to dispose of De Clameran. Now that the rascals are separated, we must prevent their coming together again."

"I understand," said Fanferlot, winking his eye; "I am to create a diversion."

"Exactly. Go out by the Rue de la Huchette, and hasten to the Pont St. Michel; loaf along the river bank, and finally place yourself on some of the steps of the quay, so that De Clameran may perceive he is being watched. If he fails to see you, do something to attract his attention."

"I know! I will throw a stone in the water," said Fanferlot, rubbing his hands with delight at his own brilliant idea.

"As soon as De Clameran has seen you," continued M. Verduret, "he will be alarmed, and instantly decamp. You must follow him, and he, knowing that the police are after him, will do everything to escape you. You must keep both your eyes open for he is a cunning rascal."

"I was not born yesterday."

"So much the better. You can convince him of that. Well, knowing you are at his heels, he will not dare to return to the Hôtel du Louvre, for fear of finding some troublesome visitors awaiting him. Now it is very important that he should not return to the hotel."

"But suppose he does?" said Fanferlot.

M. Verduret thought for a minute, and then replied: "It is not at all likely; but if he should, you must wait until he comes out again, and con-



tinue to follow him. But he won't enter the hotel; very likely he will take the train; but in that event don't lose sight of him, no matter if you have to follow him to Siberia. Have you money with you? "

" I will get some from Madame Alexandre."

" Very good. Ah! one word more. If the rascal does take the train, send me a line here. If he beats about the bush until night time, be on your guard, especially in lonely places; he is capable of anything."

" If necessary, may I fire? "

" Don't be rash; but, if he attacks you, of course defend yourself. Come, 'tis time you were gone."

Dubois-Fanferlot went out. M. Verduret and Prosper resumed their post of observation. " Why all this secrecy? " inquired Prosper. " De Clam-eran is guilty of ten times worse crimes than I was ever accused of, and yet my disgrace was made as public as possible."

" Don't you understand," replied the stout man, " that I wish to separate Raoul's cause from that of the marquis? But, hush! Look! " De Clam-eran had left his place near the orange woman's stand, and approached the parapet of the bridge, where he seemed to be trying to make out some unexpected object. " Ah! " murmured M. Verduret; " he has just discovered our man." De Clam-

eran's uneasiness was quite apparent; he walked forward a few steps, as if intending to cross the bridge; then, suddenly turning round, walked rapidly away in the direction of the Rue St. Jacques. "He is caught!" cried M. Verduret with delight.

At that moment the door opened, and Madame Nina Gipsy, alias Palmyre Chocareille, entered. Poor Nina! Each day since she entered Madeleine's service seemed to have aged her a year. Tears had dimmed the brilliancy of her beautiful black eyes; her rosy cheeks were pale and hollow, and her merry smile was quite gone. Poor Gipsy, once so gay and spirited, now crushed beneath the burden of her sorrows, was the picture of misery. Prosper thought that, wild with joy at seeing him, and proud of having so nobly devoted herself to his interests, Nina would throw her arms around his neck and hold him in a tight embrace. He was mistaken; and though entirely devoted to Madeleine since he knew the reason of her harshness to him, his deception affected him deeply. Nina scarcely seemed to know him. She saluted him timidly, almost like a stranger. She stood looking at M. Verduret, with a mixture of fear and devotion, like a poor dog that has been cruelly treated by its master.

He, however, was kind and gentle in his manner

towards her. "Well, my dear," he asked encouragingly, "what news do you bring me?"

"Something is going on at the house, sir, and I have been trying to get here to tell you; at last, Mademoiselle Madeleine made an excuse for sending me out."

"You must thank her for her confidence in me. I suppose she carried out the plan we decided upon?"

"Yes, sir."

"She receives the Marquis de Clameran's visits?"

"Since the marriage has been decided upon, he comes every day, and mademoiselle receives him with kindness. He seems to be delighted."

These answers filled Prosper with anger and alarm. The poor fellow, not comprehending M. Verduret's intricate moves, felt as if he were being tossed about from pillar to post, and made the tool and laughing-stock of everybody. "What!" he cried; "this worthless Marquis de Clameran, an assassin, and a thief, allowed to visit at M. Fauvel's and pay his addresses to Madeleine? Where are the promises which you made me, sir? Have you merely been amusing yourself by raising my hopes, to dash them —"

"Enough!" interrupted M. Verduret harshly; "you are really too good a young man to under-

stand anything, my friend. If you are incapable of helping yourself, at least have sense enough to refrain from stupidly importuning those who are working for you. Do you not think you have already done sufficient mischief? ” Having administered this rebuke, he turned to Nina, and said in softer tones: “ Go on, my child; what have you discovered? ”

“ Nothing positive, sir; but enough to make me nervous, and fearful of impending danger. I am not certain, but suspect from appearances, that some dreadful catastrophe is about to happen. It may only be a presentiment. I cannot get any information from Madame Fauvel; she moves about like a ghost, never opening her lips. She seems to be afraid of her niece, and to be trying to conceal something from her.”

“ What about M. Fauvel? ”

“ I was just about to tell you, sir. Some fearful misfortune has happened to him, you may depend upon it. He wanders about as if he had lost his mind. Something certainly occurred yesterday; his voice even is changed. He is so harsh and irritable that mademoiselle and M. Lucien were wondering what could be the matter with him. He seems to be on the eve of giving way to a burst of anger; and there is a wild strange look about his eyes, especially when he looks at madame. Yester-



day evening, when M. de Clameran was announced, he jumped up, and hurried out of the room, saying that he had some work to do in his study."

A triumphant exclamation from M. Verduret interrupted Nina. He was radiant. "Ah!" he said to Prosper, forgetting his bad humor of a few minutes before; "ah! what did I tell you?"

"He has evidently —"

"Been afraid to give way to his first impulse; of course he had. He is now seeking for proofs of your assertions. He must have them by this time. Did the ladies go out yesterday?"

"Yes, a part of the day."

"What became of M. Fauvel?"

"The ladies took me with them; we left M. Fauvel at home."

"There is no longer a doubt, now!" cried the stout man; "he looked for proofs, and found them too! Your letter told him exactly where to go. Ah, Prosper, that unfortunate letter gives more trouble than everything else together."

These words seemed to throw a sudden light on Nina's mind. "I understand it now!" she exclaimed. "M. Fauvel knows everything."

"That is, he thinks he knows everything; and what he has been led to believe, is worse than the true state of affairs."

"That accounts for the order which M. Cavailon overheard him give to his valet, Evariste."

“What order?”

“He told Evariste to bring every letter that came to the house, no matter to whom addressed, into his study, and hand it to him; saying that, if this order was disobeyed, he should be instantly discharged.”

“At what time was this order given?” asked M. Verduret.

“Yesterday afternoon.”

“That is what I was afraid of,” cried M. Verduret. “He has clearly made up his mind what course to pursue, and is keeping quiet so as to make his vengeance more sure. The question is, Have we still time to counteract his projects? Have we time to convince him that the anonymous letter was incorrect in some of its assertions?”

He tried to hit upon some plan for repairing the damage done by Prosper’s foolish letter. “Thank you for your information, my dear child,” he said after a long silence. “I will decide at once what steps to take, for it will never do to sit quietly and let things go on in this way. Return home without delay, and be careful of everything you say and do; for M. Fauvel suspects you of being in the plot. Send me word of anything that happens, no matter how insignificant it may be.”

Nina, thus dismissed, did not move, but asked timidly: “What about Caldas, sir?”

This was the third time during the last fortnight that Prosper had heard this name, Caldas. The first time, it had been whispered in his ear by a respectable-looking, middle-aged man, who promised him his protection on one of the days he was at the Préfecture. The second time, the investigating magistrate had mentioned it in connection with Nina's history. Prosper thought over all the men he had ever been connected with, but could recall none named Caldas.

The impassible M. Verduret started and trembled at the sound of this name, but, quickly recovering himself, said: "I promised to find him for you, and I will keep my promise. Now you must go; good-by."

It was twelve o'clock, and M. Verduret suddenly remembered that he was hungry. He called Madame Alexandre, and the all-powerful hostess of the Grand Archangel soon placed a tempting breakfast before Prosper and his protector. But the dainty meal failed to smooth M. Verduret's perplexed brow. To the eager questions and complimentary remarks of Madame Alexandre, he merely answered: "Hush, hush! let me alone; keep quiet."

For the first time since he had known the stout man, Prosper saw him betray anxiety and hesitation. He remained silent as long as he could, and

then uneasily said: "I am afraid I have embarrassed you very much, sir."

"Yes, you have dreadfully embarrassed me," replied M. Verduret. "What on earth to do now, I don't know! Shall I hasten matters, or keep quiet and wait for the next move. And I am bound by a sacred promise. Come, I must go and consult the investigating magistrate. He can perhaps assist me. You had better come too."

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As M. Verduret had anticipated, Prosper's anonymous letter had a terrible effect upon M. Fauvel. It was morning. M. Fauvel had just entered his study to attend to his correspondence. After opening a dozen letters on business, his eyes fell on the fatal missive. Something about the handwriting struck him as peculiar. It was evidently disguised, and although, owing to the fact of his being a millionaire, he was in the habit of receiving anonymous communications, sometimes abusive, but generally begging for money, this particular letter filled him with a presentiment of evil. With absolute certainty that he was about to read of some calamity, he broke the seal, and unfolding the coarse writing paper of the café, commenced to read. What he read was a terrible blow to a man whose life hitherto had been an unbroken chain of prosperity, who



could recall the past without one bitter regret, without remembering any sorrow deep enough to bring forth a tear. What! his wife deceive him! And among all men, to choose one vile enough to rob her of her jewels, and force her to be his accomplice in the ruin of an innocent young man! For did not the letter before him assert this to be the fact, and tell him how to convince himself of its truth? M. Fauvel was as bewildered as if he had been knocked on the head with a club. It was impossible for his scattered ideas to take in the enormity of what these dreadful words intimated. He seemed to be mentally and physically paralyzed, as he sat there staring blankly at the letter. But in a few minutes his reason returned.

Thus were realized all M. Verduret's presumptions. He had said, "If M. Fauvel does not yield to his first impulse, if he stops to reflect, we have time to repair the harm done." And after long and painful meditation, the banker had finally decided to wait and watch his wife. There was one simple means of ascertaining the truth. The letter stated that his wife's diamonds had been pawned. If it lied in this instance, he would treat it with the scorn it deserved. But if, on the other hand, it should prove to be true! At this moment, the servant announced that lunch was served, and M. Fauvel looked in the glass before leaving his study, to see

if his face betrayed the emotion he felt. He was shocked at the sight of his haggard features. "Shall I be able to control my feelings?" he asked himself. At table he did his utmost to look unconcerned, he talked incessantly, related several stories, hoping thus to distract the attention of the others. But, all the time he was talking, he was casting over in his mind various expedients for getting his wife out of the house long enough for him to search her room. At last he asked Madame Fauvel if she were going out at all that day.

"Yes," she replied, "the weather is dreadful, but Madeleine and I have some pressing matters to see after."

"At what time do you think of starting?"

"Immediately after lunch."

He drew a long breath as if relieved of a great weight. In a short time he would be able to learn the truth. His uncertainty was so torturing to the unhappy man that to it he preferred anything else, even the most dreadful reality. Lunch over, he lighted a cigar, but did not remain in the dining-room to smoke it, as was his habit. He went into his study, pretending he had some pressing work to attend to. He took the precaution to send Lucien out so as to be quite alone. After the lapse of half an hour, he heard the carriage drive away with his wife and niece. Hurrying into

Madame Fauvel's room, he opened her jewel drawer. Several of the cases he knew she possessed were missing, those that remained — there were ten or twelve of them — were empty. The anonymous letter had told the truth. "Oh, it cannot be!" he gasped in broken tones. "It is not possible!" He wildly pulled open other drawers in the hope of finding the jewels. Seemingly nothing was changed in his existence; he was not materially injured; the objects around him remained the same; and yet what a commotion had taken place, a commotion more unheard of, surprising than the changing of night into day. What! Valentine, the pure young girl whom he had so loved and married in spite of her poverty; Valentine, the tender, loving wife, who had become dearer and dearer to him as years rolled on; could she have been deceiving him? She, the mother of his sons! His sons? Bitter thought! Were they his sons? If she could deceive him now when she was silver-haired had she not deceived him when she was young? Not only did he suffer in the present, but the uncertainty of the past tortured his soul.

M. Fauvel did not long remain in this dejected state. Anger and a thirst for vengeance gave him fresh strength, and he determined to sell his past happiness dearly. He well knew that the fact of

the diamonds being missing was not sufficient ground upon which to base an accusation. But he had plenty of means of procuring other proofs. He began calling his valet, and ordering him to bring to him every letter that should come to the house. He then telegraphed to a notary at St. Remy, for minute and authentic information about the De Lagors family, and especially about Raoul. Finally, following the advice of the anonymous letter, he went to the Préfecture of Police, hoping to obtain De Clameran's biography. But the police, fortunately for many people, are as discreetly silent as the grave. They guard their secrets as a miser his treasure. Nothing but an order from the Public Prosecutor could reveal the secrets of those terrible green boxes which are kept in an apartment by themselves, guarded like a banker's strong room. M. Fauvel was politely asked what motives urged him to inquire into the past life of a French citizen; and, as he declined to state his reasons, he was told he had better apply to the above-mentioned functionary. This advice he could not follow. He had sworn that the secret of his wrongs should be confined to the three persons interested. He chose to avenge his own injuries, to be alone the judge and executioner. He returned home more enraged than ever; there he found a telegram answering the one which he had



sent to St. Remy. It was as follows: "The De Lagors are very poor, and there has never been any member of the family named Raoul. Madame De Lagors has no son, only two daughters." This information was the final blow. The banker thought, when he discovered his wife's infamy, that she had sinned as deeply as woman could sin; but he now saw that she had practiced a deception more shocking than the crime itself.

"Wretched creature!" he cried with anguish; "in order to see her lover constantly, she dared present him to me under the name of a nephew who never existed. She had the shameless courage to introduce him beneath my roof, and seat him at my fireside, between myself and my sons; and I, confiding fool that I was, welcomed the villain, and lent him money."

That day he succeeded in concealing his agitation, and kept up a flow of talk during the whole time the dinner lasted. But at about nine o'clock, when De Clameran called, he hastened from the house, for fear that he would be unable to control his indignation, and did not return home until late in the night. The next day he reaped the fruit of his prudence. Among the letters which his valet brought him at noon, was one bearing the post-mark of Vésinet. He carefully opened the envelope, and read, "DEAR AUNT — It is im-

peratively necessary for me to see you to-day; so I expect you. I will explain why I am prevented from calling at your house. — *RAOUL.*”

“I have them now!” cried M. Fauvel, trembling with satisfaction at the near prospect of vengeance. Eager to lose no time, he opened a drawer, took out a revolver, and examined the hammer to see if it worked easily. He certainly imagined himself alone, but a vigilant eye was watching his movements. Nina immediately upon her return from the Grand Archangel, stationed herself at the key-hole of the study door, and saw all that occurred. M. Fauvel laid the weapon on the mantelpiece, and nervously resealed the letter, which he then took to the place where the letters were usually left, not wishing his wife to know that Raoul’s letter had passed through his hands. He was only absent a few minutes, but inspired by the imminence of the danger, Nina darted into the study, and rapidly extracted the cartridges from the revolver. “By this means,” she murmured, “the immediate peril is averted, and M. Verduret will now perhaps have time to act. I must send Cavaillon to tell him what is happening.”

She hurried downstairs, and sent the clerk with a message, telling him to leave it with Madame Alexandre, if M. Verduret had left the hotel. An hour later, Madame Fauvel ordered her carriage,

and went out. M. Fauvel jumped into a hackney coach, and followed her.

“God grant that M. Verduret may be in time!” said Nina to herself, “otherwise Madame Fauvel and Raoul are lost.”

\* \* \* \* \*

THE day that the Marquis de Clameran perceived that Raoul de Lagors was the only obstacle between him and Madeleine, he swore that the obstacle should be removed. He at once took steps for the accomplishment of his purpose. As Raoul was walking home at Vésinet about midnight, he was assailed at a lonely spot not far from the station by three men, who, determined, so they said, to see the time by his watch, fell upon him suddenly, and but for Raoul's wonderful strength and agility, would have left him dead on the spot. As it was, he soon, by his skilfully plied blows, for he was proficient in fencing, and had learned boxing in England, made his enemies take to their heels. He quietly continued his walk home, fully determined in future, to be well armed when he went out at night. He never for an instant suspected his accomplice of having instigated the assault. But two days afterwards, while sitting in a café he frequented, a burly, vulgar-looking man, a stranger to him, tried to draw him into a quarrel about nothing, and finally threw a card in his face,

saying he was ready to grant him satisfaction when and where he pleased. Raoul rushed towards the man to chastise him on the spot; but his friends held him back.

“Very well, then,” said he; “be at home to-morrow morning, sir, and I will send two of my friends to you.” As soon as the stranger had left, Raoul recovered from his excitement, and began to wonder what could have been the motive for this evidently premeditated insult. Picking up the card of the bully, he read:

W. H. B. JACOBSON

*Formerly Garibaldian volunteer,  
Ex-staff officer of the armies of the South,  
(Italy, America).  
30, Rue Leonie.*

“Oh! oh!” thought Raoul, “this glorious soldier may very possibly have won his laurels in a fencing school!”

Still the insult had been offered in the presence of others; and, no matter who the offender was, it must be noticed. Raoul requested two of his friends to call upon M. Jacobson early the next morning, and make arrangements for the duel. It was settled that they should render him an account of their mission at the Hôtel du Louvre, where he arranged to sleep. Everything being ar-



ranged, Raoul went out to find out something about M. Jacobson. He was an expert at the business, but he had considerable trouble. The information he obtained was not very promising. M. Jacobson, who lived in a very suspicious-looking little hotel, frequented chiefly by women of loose character, was described to him as an eccentric gentleman, whose means of livelihood was a problem difficult to solve. He reigned despotically at an ordinary near by, went out a great deal, came home very late, and seemed to have no capital to live upon, save his military titles, his talent for entertaining, and a notable quantity of various expedients.

“That being his character,” thought Raoul, “I cannot see what object he can have in picking a quarrel with me. What good will it do him to run a sword through my body? Not the slightest; and, moreover, his pugnacious conduct is apt to attract the attention of the police, who from what I hear, are the last people this warrior would like to have after him. Therefore, for acting as he has done, he must have some reasons which I am unable to discern.”

The result of his meditations was, that Raoul, upon his return to the Hôtel du Louvre, did not mention a word of his adventure to De Clameran, whom he still found up. At half-past eight his seconds arrived. M. Jacobson had agreed to fight,

and had chosen the sword; but it must be that very hour, in the Bois de Vincennes. Raoul felt very uneasy, nevertheless he boldly said: "I accept the gentleman's conditions." They went to the place decided upon, and after an interchange of a few thrusts Raoul was slightly wounded in the right shoulder. The "Ex-staff officer of the armies of the South" wished to continue the combat; but Raoul's seconds — brave young men — declared that honor was satisfied and that they had no intention of subjecting their friend's life to unnecessary hazards. The ex-officer was forced to submit, and unwillingly retired from the field. Raoul went home delighted at having escaped with nothing more serious than a little loss of blood, and resolved to keep clear of all so-called Garibaldians in the future. In fact, a night's reflection had convinced him that De Clameran was the instigator of the two attempts on his life. Madame Fauvel having told him what conditions Madeleine placed on her consent to marry, Raoul instantly saw how necessary his removal would be, now that he was an impediment in the way of De Clameran's success. He recalled a thousand insignificant events of the last few days, and, on skilfully questioning the marquis, had his suspicions changed into certainty. This conviction that the man whom he had so materially assisted in his criminal plans, had

hired assassins to make away with him, made him mad with rage. This treason seemed, to him, monstrous. He was as yet not sufficiently experienced in ruffianism to know that one villain always sacrifices another to advance his own projects; he was credulous enough to believe in the old adage, of "honor amongst thieves." His rage was naturally mingled with fright, well knowing that his life hung by a thread, when it was threatened by a daring scoundrel like De Clameran. He had twice miraculously escaped; a third attempt would more than likely prove fatal. Knowing his accomplice's nature, Raoul saw himself surrounded by snares; he saw death before him in every form; he was equally afraid of going out, and of remaining at home. He only ventured with the most suspicious caution into the most public places; he feared poison as much as the assassin's knife, and imagined that every dish placed before him tasted of strychnine. This life of torture was intolerable, so with a desire for revenge as much as with a view of securing his personal safety, he determined to anticipate a struggle which he felt must terminate in the death of either De Clameran or himself. "Better kill the devil," said he, "than be killed by him." In his days of poverty, Raoul had often risked his liberty to obtain a few guineas, and would not have hesitated to make short work

of a person like De Clameran. But with money prudence had come. He wished to enjoy his four hundred thousand francs without being compromised by committing a murder which might be discovered; he therefore began to devise some other means of getting rid of his dreaded accomplice. In the meantime, he thought it would be a good thing to thwart De Clameran's marriage with Madeleine. He was sure that he would thus strike him to the heart, and this was at least a satisfaction. Raoul was persuaded that, by openly siding with Madeleine and her aunt, he could save them from De Clameran's clutches. Having fully resolved upon this course, he wrote a note to Madame Fauvel asking for an interview. The poor woman hastened to Vésinet convinced that some new misfortune was in store for her. Her alarm was groundless. She found Raoul more tender and affectionate than he had ever been. He saw the necessity of reassuring her, and winning his old place in her forgiving heart, before making his disclosures. He succeeded. The poor lady had a smiling and happy look as she sat in an armchair, with Raoul kneeling beside her.

"I have distressed you too long, my dear mother," he said in his softest tones; "but I repent sincerely; now listen to me."

He had not time to say more; the door was vio-



lently thrown open, and Raoul, springing to his feet, was confronted by M. Fauvel. The banker had a revolver in his hand, and was ghastly pale. It was evident that he was making super-human efforts to remain calm, like a judge whose duty it is to justly punish crime.

"Ah," he exclaimed with a horrible laugh, "you look surprised. You did not expect me? You thought that my imbecile credulity assured you an eternal impunity!"

Raoul had the courage to place himself before Madame Fauvel, and to stand prepared to receive the expected bullet.

"I assure you, uncle," he began.

"Enough!" interrupted the banker with an angry gesture, "let me hear no more infamous falsehoods! End this odious comedy, of which I am no longer the dupe."

"I swear to you —"

"Spare yourself the trouble of denying anything. Do you not see that I know all. I know who pawned my wife's diamonds. I know who committed the robbery for which an innocent man was arrested and imprisoned!"

Madame Fauvel, white with terror, fell upon her knees. At last it had come — the dreadful day had come. Vainly had she added falsehood to falsehood; vainly had she sacrificed herself and others; all was

discovered. She saw that she was lost, and wringing her hands, with her face bathed in tears, she moaned: "Pardon, André! I beg you, forgive me!"

At these heart-broken tones, the banker shook like a leaf. This voice brought before him the twenty years of happiness which he had owed to this woman, who had always been the mistress of his heart, whose slightest wish had been his law, and who, by a smile or a frown, could make him the happiest or the most miserable of men. Could this wretched woman crouching at his feet be his beloved Valentine, the pure, innocent girl whom he had found secluded in the château of La Verberie? Could this be the cherished wife whom he had worshipped for many years? In the memory he seemed to forget the present.

"Unhappy woman," he murmured, "unhappy woman! What had I done that you should thus deceive me? Ah, my only fault was loving you too deeply, and letting you see it. One wearies of everything in this world, even happiness. Did pure domestic joys pall upon you, and weary you, driving you to seek the excitement of sinful passion? Were you so tired of the atmosphere of respect and affection which surrounded you, that you must needs risk your honor and mine by braving public opinion? Oh, into what an abyss you

have fallen, Valentine! If you were wearied by my constant devotion, had the thought of your children no power to restrain your evil passions? ”

M. Fauvel spoke slowly, with painful effort, as if each word choked him. Raoul, who listened with attention, saw that if the banker knew some things, he certainly did not know all. He saw that erroneous information had misled the unhappy man, and that he was a victim of false appearances. He determined to convince him of the mistake under which he was laboring.

“ Sir,” he began, “ will you consent to listen — ”

But the sound of Raoul’s voice was sufficient to break the charm. “ Silence! ” cried the banker with angry oath; “ silence! ”

For some moments nothing was heard but the sobs of Madame Fauvel.

“ I came here,” continued the banker, “ with the intention of surprising and killing you both. I have surprised you, but — my courage, yes my courage fails me — I cannot kill an unarmed man.”

Raoul once more tried to speak.

“ Let me finish! ” interrupted M. Fauvel. “ Your life is in my hands; the law excuses the vengeance of an outraged husband, but I refuse to take advantage of it. I see on your mantle-piece a revolver similar to mine; take it, and defend yourself.”

“Never!”

“Defend yourself!” cried the banker raising his weapon, “if you do not —”

Seeing the barrel of M. Fauvel’s revolver close to his breast, Raoul in self-defense seized his own and prepared to fire.

“Stand in that corner of the room, and I will stand in this,” continued the banker; “and when the clock strikes, which will be in a few seconds, we will both fire together.”

They took the places designated, and stood perfectly still. But the horror of the scene was too much for Madame Fauvel to witness it any longer without interposing. She understood but one thing; her son and her husband were about to kill each other before her eyes. Fright and horror gave her strength to rise and rush between the two men.

“For God’s sake, have mercy, André!” she cried, turning to her husband and wringing her hands with anguish; “let me tell you everything; don’t kill him.”

M. Fauvel mistook this burst of maternal love, for the pleadings of an adulterous wife defending her lover. He roughly seized his wife by the arm, and thrust her aside; “Get out of the way!” he cried.

But she would not be repulsed; rushing up to Raoul, she threw her arms around him, and said to



her husband: "Kill me, and me alone; for I alone am guilty."

At these words M. Fauvel's rage knew no bounds, he deliberately took aim at the guilty pair, and fired. As neither Raoul nor Madame Fauvel fell, the banker fired a second time; then a third. He was preparing for a fourth shot, when a man rushed into the room, snatched the revolver from the banker's hand, and, throwing him on the sofa, ran towards Madame Fauvel. This man was M. Verduret, who had been warned by Cavaillon, but who did not know that Nina had previously withdrawn the charges from M. Fauvel's weapon.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, "she is unhurt."

But the banker had already regained his feet. "Leave me alone," he cried, struggling to get free, "I will have vengeance!"

M. Verduret seized his wrists in a vice-like grasp, and in a solemn tone, so as to give more weight to his words, he said: "Thank God you are saved from committing a terrible crime; the anonymous letter deceived you."

M. Fauvel never once thought of asking this stranger who he was and where he came from. He heard and understood but one fact: The anonymous letter had lied. "But my wife confesses her guilt," he stammered.

“Yes,” replied M. Verduret, “but not of the crime you imagine. Do you know who that man is, that you wish to kill?”

“No.”

“Her son!”

The presence of this well-informed stranger seemed to confound Raoul and to frighten him more than M. Fauvel’s threats had done. Yet he had sufficient presence of mind to say: “It is the truth!”

The banker looked wildly from Raoul to M. Verduret; then, fastening his haggard eyes on his wife exclaimed: “What you tell me is not possible! Give me proofs!”

“You shall have proofs,” replied M. Verduret, “but first listen.”

And rapidly, with his wonderful talent for exposition, he related the principal events of the drama he had discovered. The true state of the case was terribly distressing to M. Fauvel, but nothing compared with what he had suspected. His throbbing, yearning heart told him that he still loved his wife. Why should he punish a fault committed so very long ago, and atoned for by twenty years of devotion and suffering? For some moments after M. Verduret had finished his explanation, M. Fauvel remained silent. So many strange events had happened, following each other

in such quick succession, and culminating in the shocking scene which had just taken place, that M. Fauvel seemed to be too bewildered to think clearly. If his heart counselled pardon and forgetfulness, wounded pride and self-respect demanded vengeance. If Raoul, the baleful witness, the living proof of a far-off sin, were not in existence, M. Fauvel would not have hesitated. Gaston de Clameran was dead; he would have held out his arms to his wife, saying: "Come to my heart! your sacrifices for my honor shall be your absolution; let the sad past be forgotten." But the sight of Raoul froze the words upon his lips.

"So this is your son," said he to his wife, "this man, who has plundered you and robbed me! "

Madame Fauvel was unable to utter a word in reply to these reproachful words.

"Oh!" said M. Verduret, "Madame will tell you that this young man is the son of Gaston de Clameran; she has never doubted it. But, the truth is — "

"What!"

"That in order to swindle her more easily, he has perpetrated a gross imposture."

During the last few minutes Raoul had been quietly creeping towards the door hoping to escape while no one was thinking of him. But M. Verduret, who anticipated his intention, was watch-

ing him out of the corner of his eye, and stopped him just as he was about leaving the room. "Not so fast, my pretty youth," he said, dragging him into the middle of the apartment; "It is not polite to leave us so unceremoniously. Let us have a little explanation before parting!"

M. Verduret's jeering words and mocking manner were a revelation for Raoul. "The merry-andrew!" he gasped, starting back with an af-frighted look.

"The same, my friend," said the stout man. "Ah, now that you recognize me, I confess that the merry-andrew and myself are one and the same; here is proof of it." And turning up his sleeve he showed his bare arm. "I think that this recent wound will convince you of my identity," he continued. "I imagine you know the villain that gave me this little decoration, that night I was walking along the Rue Bourdaloue. That being the case, you know, I have a slight claim upon you, and shall expect you to relate to us your little story." But Raoul was so terrified that he could not utter a word. "Your modesty prevents your speaking," said M. Verduret. "Bravo! modesty belongs to talent, and for one of your age you certainly have displayed a talent for knavery."

M. Fauvel listened without understanding a



word of what was said. "Into what abyss of shame have we fallen!" he groaned.

"Reassure yourself, sir," replied M. Verduret in a serious tone. "After what I have been constrained to tell you, what remains to be said is a mere trifle. This is the end of the story. On leaving Mihonne, who had given him a full account of the misfortunes of Mademoiselle Valentine de La Verberie, De Clameran hastened to London. He had no difficulty in finding the farmer's wife to whom the old countess had intrusted Gaston's son. But here an unexpected disappointment greeted him. He learned that the child, who was registered on the parish books as Raoul-Valentin Wilson, had died of the croup when eighteen months old."

Raoul tried to protest. "Did anyone dare say that?" he commenced.

"It was not only stated, but proved, my pretty youth," replied M. Verduret. "You don't suppose I am a man to trust to mere gossip; do you?" He drew from his pocket several stamped documents, and laid them on the table. "These are the declarations of the nurse, her husband, and four witnesses. Here is an extract from the registry of births, this is a certificate of registry of death; and all these are authenticated at the French Embassy. Now are you satisfied, young man?"

“What next?” inquired M. Fauvel.

“De Clameran,” replied M. Verduret, “finding that the child was dead, supposed that he could, in spite of this disappointment, obtain money from Madame Fauvel; he was mistaken. His first attempt failed. Having an inventive turn of mind, he determined that the child should come to life again. Among his large circle of rascally acquaintances he selected the young fellow who stands before you.”

Madame Fauvel was in a pitiable state. And yet she began to feel a ray of hope; her acute anxiety had so long tortured her, that the truth was a relief. “Can this be possible?” she murmured, “can it be?”

“What?” cried the banker; “can an infamous plot like this be planned in the present day?”

“All this is false!” said Raoul boldly.

M. Verduret turned to Raoul, and, bowing with ironical respect, said: “You desire proofs, do you? You shall certainly have convincing ones. I have just left a friend of mine, M. Pâlot, who brought me valuable information from London. Now, my young gentleman, I will tell you the little story he told me, and then you can give your opinion of it. In 1847 Lord Murray, a wealthy and generous nobleman, had a jockey named Spencer, of whom he was very fond. At the Epsom races this jockey was thrown from his horse, and

killed. Lord Murray grieved over the loss of his favorite, and having no children of his own, declared his intention of adopting Spencer's son, who was then but four years old. Thus James Spencer was brought up in affluence as heir to the immense wealth of the noble lord. He was a handsome, intelligent boy, and gave satisfaction to his protector until he was sixteen years of age, when he became intimate with a worthless set of people, and went to the bad. Lord Murray, who was very indulgent, pardoned many grave faults; but one fine morning he discovered that his adopted son had been imitating his signature upon some checks. He indignantly dismissed him from his house, and told him never to show his face there again. James Spencer had been living in London about four years, managing to support himself by gambling and swindling, when he met De Clameran, who offered him twenty-five thousand francs to play a part in a little comedy which he had himself arranged."

"You are a detective!" interrupted Raoul, not caring to hear any more.

The stout man smiled blandly.

"At present," he replied, "I am merely Prosper Bertomy's friend. It depends entirely upon yourself, as to which character I shall hereafter appear in."

“What do you require me to do?”

“Where are the three hundred and fifty thousand francs which you have stolen?”

The young rascal hesitated a moment and then said: “The money is here.”

“Very good. This frankness will be of service to you. I know that the money is in this room, and also that it is at the bottom of that cupboard. Do you intend to refund it?”

Raoul saw that his game was lost. He tremblingly went to the cupboard, and pulled out several rolls of bank notes, and an enormous package of pawnbroker's tickets.

“Very well done,” said M. Verduret, as he carefully examined the money and papers; “this is the most sensible step you ever took.”

Raoul relied on this moment, when everybody's attention would be absorbed by the money, to make his escape. He crept towards the door, gently opened it, slipped out, and locked it, for the key was on the outside.

“He has escaped!” cried M. Fauvel.

“Of course,” replied M. Verduret, without even looking up; “I thought he would have sense enough to do that.”

“But is he to go unpunished?”

“My dear sir, would you have this affair become a public scandal? Do you wish your wife's



name to be brought into a case of this nature at the police court? ”

“Oh! sir.”

“Then the best thing you can do is to let the rascal go. Here are receipts for all the articles which he has pawned, so that we should consider ourselves fortunate. He has kept fifty thousand francs, but that is all the better for you. That sum will enable him to leave France.”

Like every one else, M. Fauvel yielded to M. Verduret’s ascendancy. Gradually he had awakened to the true state of affairs; prospective happiness no longer seemed impossible. With earnest gratitude he seized M. Verduret’s hand, and said in broken tones: “Oh, sir! How can I ever repay the great service you have rendered me? ”

M. Verduret reflected a moment, and then replied: “If you consider yourself under any obligations to me, sir, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“A favor! you! ask of me! Speak, sir, you have but to name it. My fortune and my life are at your disposal.”

“I will not hesitate, then, to explain myself. I am Prosper’s friend. You can restore him to his former honorable position. You can do that much for him, sir! He loves Mademoiselle Madeleine — ”

“Madeleine shall be his wife, sir,” interrupted the banker; “I give you my word. And I will so

publicly exonerate him, that not a shadow of suspicion will ever rest upon his name."

The stout man quietly took up his hat and cane, as if he had been paying an ordinary call. "You will excuse my importuning you," said he, "but Madame Fauvel — "

"André," murmured the wretched woman, "André! "

The banker ran to his wife, and, clasping her in his arms, said tenderly: "No, I will not be foolish enough to struggle against my heart. I do not pardon, Valentine; I forget; I forget 'all! "

M. Verduret had nothing more to do at Vésinet. Without taking leave of the banker, he quietly left the room, and, jumping into his cab, ordered the driver to return to Paris, and drive to the Hôtel du Louvre as rapidly as possible. His mind was filled with anxiety. He knew that Raoul would give him no more trouble; the young rogue was now probably far off. But De Clameran should not escape unpunished; but how, without compromising Madame Fauvel, was the problem to be solved. M. Verduret thought over various expedients. De Clameran would certainly escape before long. He was bemoaning his inability to come to a satisfactory decision, when the cab stopped in front of the Hôtel du Louvre. It was almost dark. A crowd of people was collected round

about the entrance, eagerly discussing some exciting event which seemed to have just taken place.

"What has happened?" asked M. Verduret of one of the crowd.

"The strangest thing you have ever heard of," replied the man: "yes, I saw it with my own eyes. He first appeared at that seventh story window, he was only half dressed. Some men tried to seize him; but, bah! with the agility of a squirrel, he jumped out upon the roof, shrieking, 'Murder! murder!' The recklessness of his conduct led me to suppose —" The gossip stopped short in his narrative, very much surprised and vexed; his questioner had vanished.

"If it should be De Clameran!" thought M. Verduret; "if terror has deranged that brain, so capable of working out great crimes!"

While thus talking to himself, he elbowed his way into the courtyard of the hotel. At the foot of the principal staircase he found M. Fanferlot and three peculiar looking individuals waiting together.

"Well!" cried M. Verduret, "What has happened?"

"This is what has happened, sir," said Fanferlot dejectedly. "I am doomed to ill luck. You see how it is; this is the only chance I ever had of

working out a beautiful case, and puff! my criminal goes and sells me."

"Then it is De Clameran who —"

"Of course it is. When the rascal saw me this morning, he scampered off like a hare. You should have seen him run, I thought he would never stop this side of Ivry; but not at all. On reaching the Boulevard des Ecoles, a sudden idea seemed to strike him, and he made a bee-line for his hotel; I suppose, to secure his pile of money. Directly he gets here, what does he see? these three friends of mine. The sight of these gentlemen had the effect of a sunstroke upon him; he went raving mad on the spot."

"Where is he now?"

"At the Préfecture, I suppose. Some policemen handcuffed him, and drove off with him in a cab."

M. Verduret and Fanferlot found De Clameran in one of the private cells reserved for dangerous prisoners. He had on a strait-waistcoat, and was struggling violently against three men, who were striving to hold him, while a physician tried to force him to swallow a potion.

"Help!" he shrieked, "help, for God's sake! Do you not see my brother coming after me? Look! he wants to poison me!"

M. Verduret shuddered as he left the Préfecture. "Madame Fauvel is saved," he murmured,



“since God has himself punished De Clameran! The File No. 113 will never leave its portfolio.”

\* \* \* \* \*

ONE morning some days later, M. Lecoq — the official Lecoq, who resembles the head of a department — was walking up and down his private office, looking at the clock at every moment. At last, a bell rang, and the faithful Janouille ushered in Madame Nina and Prosper Bertomy.

“Ah,” said M. Lecoq, “you are punctual, my fond lovers; that is well.”

“We are not lovers, sir,” replied Madame Gipsy. “Only M. Verduret’s orders have brought us together here to meet him.”

“Very well,” said the celebrated detective; “then be good enough to wait a few minutes; I will tell him you are here.”

During the quarter of an hour that Nina and Prosper remained alone together, they did not exchange a word. Finally a door opened, and M. Verduret appeared.

Nina and Prosper eagerly started towards him; but he checked them by one of those looks which no one ever dared to resist. “You have come,” he said severely, “to hear the secret of my conduct. I have promised, and will keep my word, however painful it may be to my feelings. Listen,

then. My best friend is a loyal, honest fellow, named Caldas. Eighteen months ago this friend was the happiest of men. Infatuated by a woman, he lived for her alone, and, fool that he was, imagined that as she owed all to him, she loved him."

"Yes!" cried Nina, "yes, she loved him!"

"So be it. She loved him so much, that one fine night she went off with another man. In his first moments of despair, Caldas wished to kill himself. Then he reflected that it would be wiser to live, and avenge himself."

"But then —" faltered Prosper.

"Then Caldas avenged himself in his own way. He made the woman who deceived him recognize his immense superiority over his rival. Weak, timid, and without intelligence the latter was disgraced and falling into the abyss, where Caldas' powerful hand saved him. For you have understood, have you not? The woman is Nina; the seducer is yourself; and Caldas is —"

With a quick, dexterous movement, he threw off his wig and whiskers, and stood before them the real, intelligent and proud Lecoq.

"Caldas!" cried Nina.

"No, not Caldas, nor Verduret either, but Lecoq, the detective!"

There was a moment of astonished silence, then

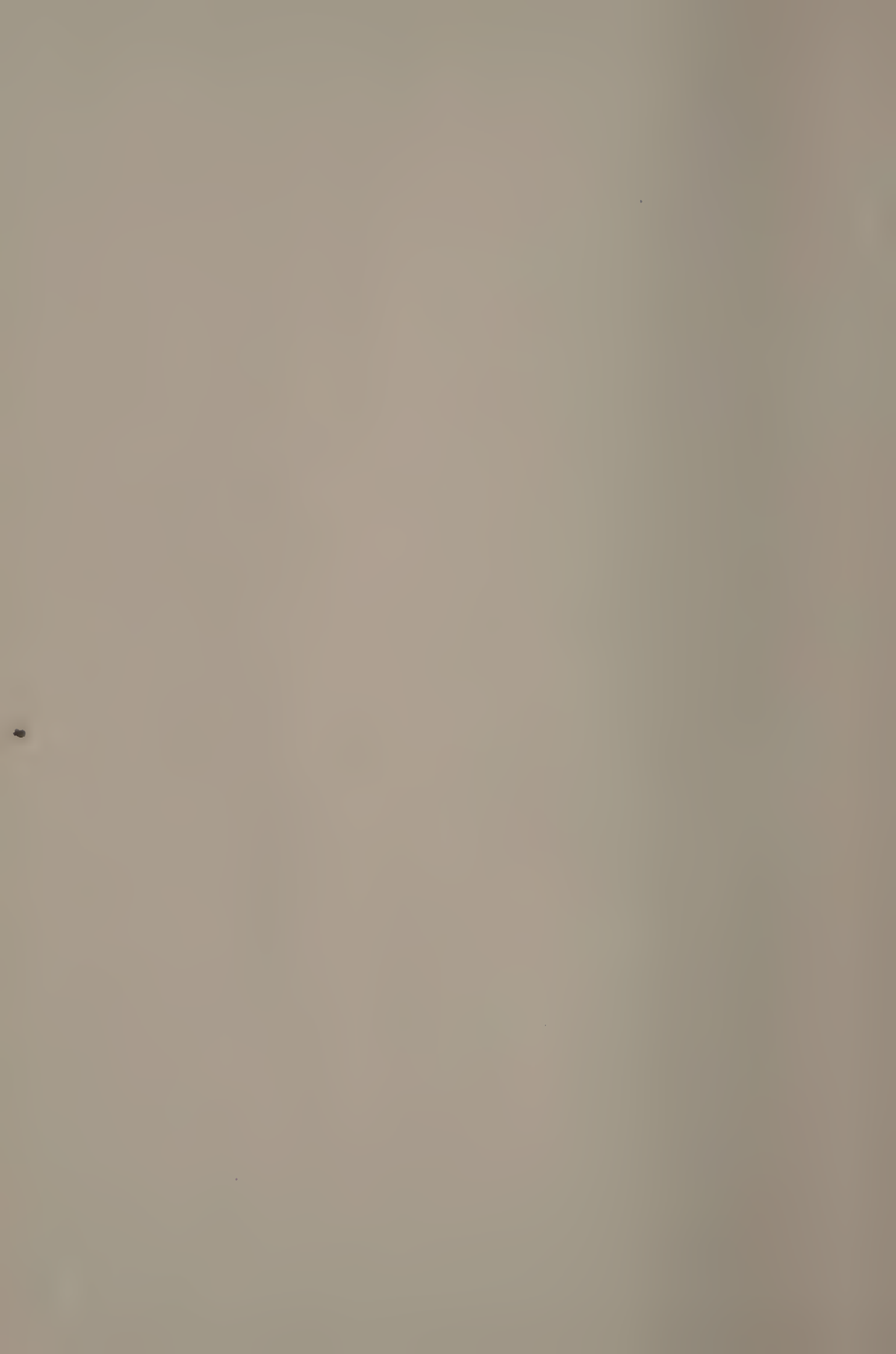


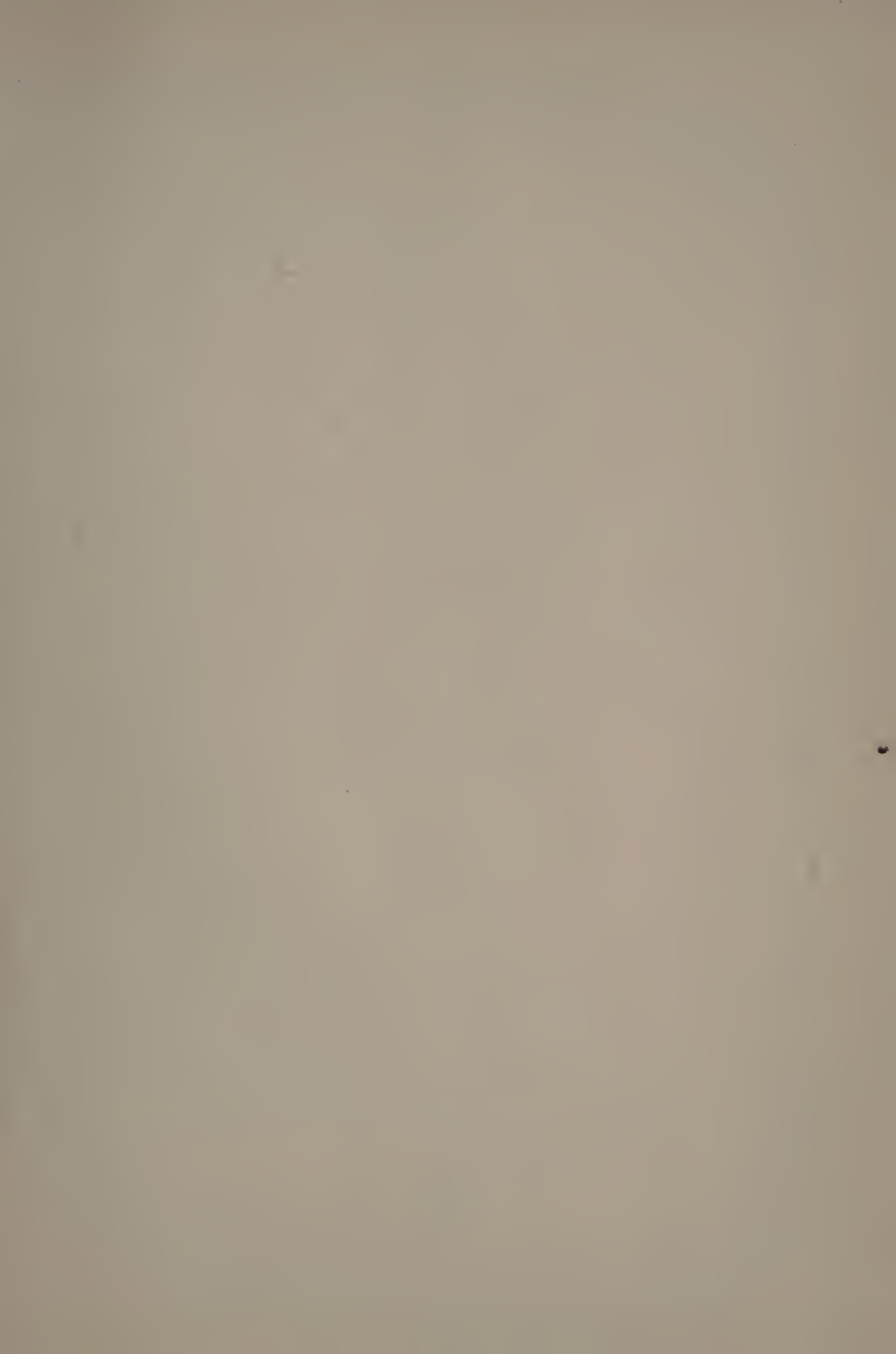














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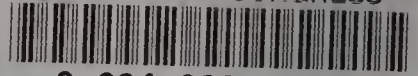
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